

A TREASURY OF  
MYSTIC TERMS





# A TREASURY OF MYSTIC TERMS

PART III  
SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE &  
PRACTICE



VOLUME 14

JOHN DAVIDSON

RADHA SOAMI SATSANG BEAS

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JOHN DAVIDSON

WITH THE HELP OF AN INTERNATIONAL TEAM

*A Treasury of Mystic Terms* has been compiled using the collective skills of an international team of researchers, contributors, assistant editors and readers with a wide variety of religious and cultural backgrounds. All members of the team are spiritual seekers, most of whom have found inspiration and encouragement in the teachings of the mystics of Beas in India. All those involved have given freely to this project, both as a source of inspiration for themselves, and as a way of showing to others the essential unity behind all the apparent variety in religion, philosophy, and mysticism.

Everybody has a perspective or a bias – coloured glasses through which they view the world. So although every attempt has been made to handle each entry within its own religious or mystical context, if any particular perspective is detected, it will inevitably be that of the contributors and their perception of mysticism. This does not mean, of course, that the contributors have always been in agreement. The preparation of the *Treasury* has often resulted in healthy debate!

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(‘ABĀ’ – SHARĪ‘AH)

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

IN THE COURSE OF COMPILING AND WRITING THE *TREASURY*, the editorial team have drawn on two major sources. Firstly, the scriptures and writings of mystics and others who have written on spiritual and mystical matters. Secondly, the works of scholars concerning these texts and their associated traditions. To all of these, we will be forever grateful. Among the mystics, we owe especial gratitude to the masters of Beas who have been, and who remain, the primary source of spiritual inspiration and perspective for most of the *Treasury*'s editorial team.

Sources of the many citations have been given in the references, endnotes, and bibliography. Among these are some that must receive special mention:

The translations of the Buddhist *Dhammapada* are founded mostly upon the work of S. Radhakrishnan and Narada Thera.

Most of the translations of the *Bhagavad Gītā* have drawn upon the earlier translations of S. Radhakrishnan and Swami Tapasyananda.

Quotations from the *Ādi Granth* are from English translations endorsed by the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee.

The sayings of Heraclitus are found only as fragments, quoted in the works of other writers of antiquity. Various scholarly numbering systems exist for these fragments, the system employed here being that used by Philip Wheelwright in *Heraclitus* (Princeton University Press, 1959).

Most of the translations of Rūmī's *Maśnavī* are based upon the work of R.A. Nicholson.

Many scholarly translations of Zarathushtra's *Gāthās* into European languages have been made from defective Pahlavi translations. The translations here are from the Avestan, and are based largely on the original work of Dr I.R.S. Taraporewala.

For translations of the Buddhist Pali texts, we have made extensive use of *Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha: A New Translation of the Majjhima Nikāya*, tr. Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli, ed. & rev. Bhikkhu Bodhi (1995); *The Long Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Dīgha Nikāya*, tr. Maurice Walshe (1995); *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Saṃyutta Nikāya*, 2 vols., tr. Bhikkhu Bodhi (2000); *The Numerical Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Aṅguttara Nikāya*, tr. Bhikkhu Bodhi (2012); all published by Wisdom Publications of Somerville, Massachusetts; together with various

translations by Thanissaro Bhikkhu, published by Access to Insight ([accesstoinsight.org](http://accesstoinsight.org) and [dhammatalks.org](http://dhammatalks.org)).

The indigenous Guaraní of eastern Paraguay, made up of three large subgroups – the Mbyá, the Paí Cayuá, and the Avá-Chiripá – are described in books and articles by the most notable experts in this field, Miguel Alberto Bartolomé, León Cádogan, Alfred Métraux, and Egon Schaden. Most of the information used for the Guaraní mystical terms derives from these scholars' studies of the Mybá and Avá-Chiripá. If a term is general to all indigenous Guaraní, it is labelled (G); if a term is known only to apply to the Avá-Chiripá subgroup, it is labelled (AC). The transliteration conventions used for all Avá-Chiripá terms are the same as those used in Miguel Alberto Bartolomé's article, *Shamanism and Religion Among the Avá-Chiripá*, which resulted from his field studies in the northeastern region of Paraguay in 1968 and 1969. Bartolomé explains that since Paraguayan Guaraní has an officially recognized written form, he does not use phonetic symbols except the letter 'y' for the sixth guttural vowel.

Particular acknowledgement must be made of the extensive compilation of material made by Dr Javad Nurbakhsh in his 15-volume *Farhang-i Nurbakhsh: Iṣṭilāḥāt-i Taṣawwuf*, translated by Terry Graham *et al.* (1984–2001) as *Sufi Symbolism: The Nurbakhsh Encyclopedia of Sufi Terminology*. Dr Nurbakhsh's considerable contribution to Sufi literature has been of great help to us in the compilation of the Sufi entries in the *Treasury*, and we have drawn upon his work, both in the Persian and its English translation. The numerous extracts are reprinted by permission of Khaniqahi-Nimatullahi Publications.

Excerpts from *The Philokalia: The Complete Text, Compiled by St Nikodimos of the Holy Mountain and St Makarios of Corinth*, ed. & tr. G.E.H. Palmer, Philip Sherrard, Kallistos Ware (Faber & Faber, London), copyright © by The Eling Trust (1979, 1981, 1984, 1995) are reprinted by permission of Metropolitan Kallistos and The Eling Trust.

Existing dictionaries and encyclopaedias are naturally of great assistance when preparing a work such as the *Treasury*. We gladly acknowledge the particular help we have received from *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Yoga*, Georg Feuerstein (Paragon House, New York, 1990); *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, ed. H.A.R. Gibb *et al.* (Brill, Leiden, 1960–2005); *The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Zen Buddhism*, Helen Baroni (Rosen, New York, 2002); *Japanese-English Buddhist Dictionary*, Daito Shuppansha (Tokyo, 1965); *A Dictionary of Japanese Buddhist Terms*, Hisao Inagaki (Nagata Bunshodo, Kyoto, 1984); *Oxford Dictionary of Buddhism*, Damien Keown (Oxford University Press, 2003); *Buddhist Dictionary: Manual of Buddhist Terms and Doctrines*, Ven. Nyanatiloka (Buddhist Publication Society, Sri Lanka, 1988); *The*

*Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*, Robert Buswell & Donald Lopez (Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 2014); *A Comprehensive Etymological Dictionary of the Hebrew Language for Readers of English*, ed. Ernest Klein (Carta Jerusalem, University of Haifa, 1987); *Encyclopedia Judaica* (Judaica Multimedia, Jerusalem, 1997); *Jewish Encyclopedia* (Funk & Wagnalls, New York, 1901–6, [jewishencyclopedia.com](http://jewishencyclopedia.com)); *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (Robert Appleton Co., 1907–14); *Wikipedia* ([wikipedia.org](http://wikipedia.org), 2001–); *Hawaiian Dictionary*, Mary Kawena Pukui & Samuel Elbert (University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu, 1986); *Te Aka: Māori-English, English-Māori Dictionary and Index*, John Moorfield ([maoridictionary.co.nz](http://maoridictionary.co.nz)); *A Dictionary of the Maori Language*, Herbert Williams ([nzetc.victoria.ac.nz/tm/scholarly/tei-WillDict.html](http://nzetc.victoria.ac.nz/tm/scholarly/tei-WillDict.html)); and *The A to Z of Jainism*, Kristi Wiley (Vision, New Delhi, 2006).

Thanks are also due to Dr John Smith, now retired from the Faculty of Oriental Studies, Cambridge University, for his Unicode character fonts.

The proposed twenty-three volumes of this work, of which sixteen have now been published, constitute a non-profit, educational, and scholarly project. The elucidation of terms and the numerous citations receive significant commentary, often bringing fresh insights regarding their meaning and relationship to other terms, with inter-faith comparison highlighted by the arrangement of entries under common subject headings. By these means we seek to contribute to spiritual understanding for global human benefit and the promotion of spiritual, religious, and cultural open-mindedness. We recognize that, in all probability, the authors of the original source texts wrote their works for the benefit of humanity, not for personal profit or acclaim. We have endeavoured to walk in their footsteps.

# ABBREVIATIONS

## **General**

Abbreviations that are a common part of written language are not included in this list.

C4th	fourth century ( <i>e.g.</i> )
<i>cf.</i>	<i>confero</i> , compare (L. I compare)
<i>col.</i>	column
<i>fol.</i>	folio
<i>ff.</i>	and the following (pages, lines, <i>etc.</i> )
<i>lit.</i>	literally
n.	foot- or endnote(s)
<i>passim</i>	here and there throughout (L)
p.	page
pp.	pages
pron.	pronounced
ret.	retrieved web page, followed by the month and year of retrieval
►1 ►2 ►4	Indicates a yet-to-be-published entry in Parts I, II, or IV

## **Dates**

<i>b.</i>	born
<i>c.</i>	circa, about
<i>d.</i>	died
<i>fl.</i>	flourished
<i>r.</i>	reigned or ruled
AH	<i>Anno Hegirae</i> , Muslim lunar calendar, from 622 CE, the Hegira ( <i>al-Hijrah</i> ), the year of Muḥammad's flight to Madīnah
BCE	Before Common Era, equivalent to BC.
CE	Common Era, equivalent to AD.
SH	Solar Hijri, the official solar calendar of Iran and Afghanistan, starting on the vernal equinox.

## **Languages**

A	Arabic	C	Chinese	Gk	Greek
AC	Avá-Chiripá	Es	Spanish	H	Hindi
Am	Aramaic	Fr	French	He	Hebrew
Av	Avestan	G	Guaraní	Hw	Hawaian

J	Japanese	P	Persian	S	Sanskrit
L	Latin	Pa	Pali	Su	Sumerian
M	Marathi	Pk	Prakrit	T	Tibetan
Md	Mandaean	Pu	Punjabi	U	Urdu
Mo	Māori	Pv	Pahlavi		

### Sources Cited

See *Bibliography* for full details of published works. Published collections of the writings of Indian Saints have been referred to in source references as below. Other collections published as the *Bānī*, *Granthāvalī*, *Padāvalī* or *Shabdāvalī* of various Indian Saints have been similarly abbreviated.

<i>Bullā Sāhib kā Shabd Sār</i>	<i>Shabd Sār</i>
<i>Charaṇdās Jī kī Bānī</i>	<i>Bānī</i>
<i>Dariyā Sāhib ke chune hue Shabd</i>	<i>Chune hue Shabd</i>
<i>Dhanī Dharamdās Jī kī Shabdāvalī</i>	<i>Shabdāvalī</i>
<i>Kabīr Granthāvalī</i>	<i>Granthāvalī</i>
<i>Kabīr Sāhib kā Bījak</i>	<i>Bījak</i>
<i>Kabīr Sākhī Sangrah</i>	<i>Sākhī Sangrah</i>
<i>Keshavdās Jī kī Amīghūnt</i>	<i>Amīghūnt</i>
<i>Kullīyāt-i Bulleh Shāh</i>	<i>Kullīyāt</i>
<i>Mīrā Bṛihat Padāvalī</i>	<i>Bṛihat Padāvalī</i>
<i>Mīrā Sudhā Sindhu</i>	<i>Sindhu</i>
<i>Nāmdev kī Hindi Padāvalī</i>	<i>Padāvalī</i>
<i>Ravidās Darshan</i>	<i>Darshan</i>
<i>Sant Guru Ravidās Vāṇī</i>	<i>Vāṇī</i>
<i>Shrī Nāmdev Gāthā</i>	<i>Gāthā</i>
<i>Tulsīdās kī Bārahmāsī</i>	<i>Bārahmāsī</i>
<i>Tulsī Sāhib Hāthrasvale kī Shabdāvalī</i>	<i>Shabdāvalī</i>

Other books and texts cited are abbreviated as below. Full details are in the bibliography:

AA	“Apocrypha Anecdota II,” tr. M.R. James.
AAA	<i>The Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles</i> , 2 vols., tr. W.R. Wright.
AAF1–2	<i>Awṛād al-Aḥbāb wa Fuṣūṣ al-Ādāb</i> , 2 vols., Abū-al-Mufākhir Yahyā Bākhārī, ed. Iraj Afshār.
AAK	<i>Aḥwāl wa Aqwāl-i Shaykh Abū al-Ḥasan Kharaqānī</i> , ed. Mujtabā Mīnuwī.
AEB143	“Religion and Shamanism,” Alfred Métraux.
AF1–2	<i>The Apostolic Fathers</i> , 2 vols., tr. Kirsopp Lake.
AFH	<i>Al-Rawḍ al-Fāʾiq</i> , al-Hurayfish.
AGC	<i>Sri Guru Granth Sahib</i> , 4 vols., tr. Pritam Singh Chahil.

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AGK	<i>Sri Guru Granth Sahib: Khalsa Consensus Translation</i> , tr. Dr Sant Singh Khalsa.
AGSS	<i>Aspirant's Guide</i> , Shri Atmanandji (Dr Soneji).
AGT	<i>Sri Guru Granth Sahib</i> , 4 vols., tr. Dr Gurbachan Singh Talib.
AH1–2	<i>Against Heresies</i> , in <i>The Writings of Irenaeus</i> , 2 vols., tr. A. Roberts & W.H. Rambaud.
AM	<i>ʿAwārif al-Maʿārif</i> , Shihāb al-Dīn Suhrawardī (1855).
AMBF	<i>Aḥādīs-i Maṣnavī</i> , B. Furūzānfar.
AMMB	<i>Some Aspects of Maori Myth and Religion</i> , Elsdon Best.
ANST	<i>Anguttara Nikaya</i> , tr. Soma Thera.
ANT	<i>The Apocryphal New Testament</i> , tr. M.R. James.
ANTE	<i>The Apocryphal New Testament</i> , ed. J.K. Elliott.
ANTH	<i>The Authentic New Testament</i> , tr. H.J. Schonfield.
APJJ	<i>Ādi Purāṇa</i> , Jinasena.
ASK1–3	<i>The Arrow and the Spindle</i> , 3 vols., Samten G. Karmay.
ASNC	<i>Apocryphal Scriptures; BDK English Tripiṭaka Series</i> .
ATS1–2	<i>Asrār al-Tawḥīd fī Maqāmāt al-Shaykh Abī Saʿīd</i> , 2 vols., M. ibn Munavvar, ed. & intro. Muḥammad Raḥā Shafāʿī Kadkanī.
AYA	<i>The Holy Qurʾān</i> , tr. ʿAbdullah Yūsuf ʿAlī.
AZJW	<i>The A to Z of Jainism</i> , Kristi Wiley.
BDC	<i>The Book of Divine Consolation of the Blessed Angela of Foligno</i> , tr. M. Steegman.
BDH	<i>Bar Hebraeus's Book of the Dove</i> , tr. A.J. Wensinck.
BDV1–6	<i>The Book of the Discipline</i> , 6 vols., tr. I.B. Horner.
BGT	<i>Bhagavad Gītā</i> , tr. Swāmī Tapasyānanda.
BMC1–2	<i>Buddhist Monastic Code</i> , 2 parts, tr. Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu.
BOM	<i>The Book of Mirdad</i> , Mikhail Naimy.
BOS	<i>Badāyiʿ</i> , tr. Lucas White King.
BPPT	<i>The Book of Protection</i> , Piyadassi Thera.
BPSG	<i>The Book of the Poor in Spirit</i> , A Friend of God, tr. C.F. Kelley.
BPT1–5	<i>The Bhāgavata Purāṇa</i> , 5 vols., tr. & ann. G.V. Tagare.
BSPS	<i>Bulleh Shah</i> , J.R. Puri & T.R. Shangari.
BSUS	<i>The Buddha Speaks the Ullambana Sutra</i> , tr. Buddhist Text Translation Society.
BWIC	<i>Ibn ʿAtaʾ Illah: The Book of Wisdom</i> , tr. V. Danner, and <i>Kwaja Abdullah Ansari: Intimate Conversations</i> , tr. W. Thackston.
CA	<i>Confessions: Saint Augustine</i> , tr. R.S. Pine-Coffin.
CBBL	<i>The Complete Book of Buddha's Lists</i> , David N. Snyder.
CBD	<i>The Conference of the Birds</i> , Farid ud-Din Attar, tr. Afkham Darbandi & Dick Davis.
CCED	<i>Cosmos and Community</i> , Livia Kohn.
CCHT	<i>Contributions to the Cultural History of Early Tibet</i> , ed. Matthew T. Kapstein & Brandon Dotson.

CDBB	<i>The Connected Discourses of the Buddha</i> , 2 vols., tr. Bhikkhu Bodhi.
CDNW	“Circumcision and the Divine Name,” Elliot R. Wolfson.
CEI	<i>The Concise Encyclopedia of Islam</i> , Cyril Glassé.
CERA	<i>The Catholic Encyclopedia</i> , 15 vols.
CGAP	<i>St Augustine: Concerning the City of God against the Pagans</i> , tr. Henry Bettenson.
CMCB	<i>The Cologne Mani Codex</i> , tr. Ron Cameron & Arthur Dewely.
CPJS	<i>Collected Papers on Jaina Studies</i> , Padmanabh S. Jain.
CPM	<i>The Canonical Prayerbook of the Mandaeans</i> , tr. E.S. Drower.
CPS	<i>Commentaire sur les paradoxes des soufis (Sharh-e Shathîyât)</i> , Ruzbehan Baqli Shirazi, ed. Henry Corbin.
CSA	<i>The Confessions of Saint Augustine</i> , tr. E.B. Pusey, ed. T. Smith.
CSCM	<i>Cāritrasāra</i> , Cāmuṇḍarāya.
CTT	<i>Chuang Tzu</i> , tr. Herbert Giles.
CTW	<i>The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu</i> , tr. Burton Watson.
CU	<i>The Cloud of Unknowing</i> , tr. William Johnston.
CUCW	<i>The Cloud of Unknowing</i> , tr. Clifton Wolters.
CUEU	<i>The Cloud of Unknowing</i> , tr. Evelyn Underhill.
CVTW	“Circumcision, Vision of God, and Textual Interpretation,” Elliot R. Wolfson.
CW	<i>Angelus Silesius: The Cherubic Wanderer</i> , tr. Maria Shradý.
CWJC1–3	<i>The Complete Works of Saint John of the Cross</i> , 3 vols., tr. E.A. Peers.
CWSV1–9	<i>Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda</i> , 9 vols.
DAKU	<i>Dvādaśānuprekṣa</i> , Kārttikeya, ed. A.N. Upadye.
DASN	<i>Dīvān-i ‘Aṭṭār</i> , incl. <i>Qaṣā’id</i> , <i>Tarjīāt</i> , va <i>Ghazaliyāt</i> , ed. S. Nafīsī.
DF	<i>Divine Flashes</i> , F. ‘Iraqī, tr. W.C. Chittick & P.L. Wilson.
DFQM	<i>Dīwān ibn al-Fāriḍ</i> , ‘Umar ibn ‘Alī Sharaf al-Dīn Abū al-Qāsim al-Miṣrī.
DG1–2	<i>Dariyā Granthāvalī</i> , 2 vols., D.B. Shāstrī.
DHA	<i>Dīvān-i Khwājah Ḥāfiẓ Shīrāzī</i> , ed. Abū al-Qāsim Anjavī Shīrāzī.
DHM	<i>Dīvān-i Ḥāfiẓ</i> .
DHWC	<i>The Dīvān-i-Ḥāfiẓ</i> , 2 vols., Khwāja Shamsu-d-Dīn Muḥammad-i-Ḥāfiẓ-i-Shīrāzī, tr. H. Wilberforce Clarke.
DIH	<i>Dīvān-i Ḥāfiẓ</i> , ed. Qāzi Sajjād Ḥusayn.
DIIM	<i>Dīvān-i Imāmī</i> , Imāmī of Harāt.
DJPS	<i>Davening</i> , Zalman Schachter-Shalomi.
DL	<i>Divine Light</i> , Maharaj Charan Singh.
DMK	<i>Dīvān-i Mushtāqīyah</i> , Muẓaffar ‘Alī Shāh Kirmānī, ed. Javād Nūrbakhsh.
DMVZ	<i>Depositio Martyrum</i> , ed. R. Valentini & G. Zucchetti.
DNAJ	<i>Derasha</i> , Naḥmanides, ed. Adolf Jellenik.

DNAM	<i>Dictionary of Native American Mythology</i> , S.D. Gill & I.F. Sullivan.
DNKR	<i>Dīvān-i Ash'ār-i Nāṣir-i Khusraw Qubādiyānī</i> , incl. <i>Rōshnā'ī-Nāmāh va Sa'ādat-Nāmāh va Risālah-yi ba-Naśr</i> , ed. N.A. Taqvī.
DNTB	<i>Digha Nikaya</i> , tr. Thanissaro Bhikkhu.
DOI	<i>A Dictionary of Islam</i> , T.P. Hughes.
DPN	<i>The Dhammapada</i> , Narada Thera.
DPR	<i>The Dhammapada</i> , tr. S Radhakrishnan.
DR	<i>The Divine Romance</i> , John Davidson.
DRA	<i>Discourses of Rūmī</i> , tr. A.J. Arberry.
DS1–19	<i>Dàoshū shí'èr zhōng</i> , 19 titles, Liú Yīmíng.
DSNS	<i>Dravya Sangraha</i> , Nemichandra Siddhantideva, tr. S.C. Ghoshal.
DSPS	<i>Discourse on the Sermon</i> , Venerable Mahasi Sayadaw.
DSPV	<i>Documentos saludables para las almas piadosas</i> , D.P. de Valdivia.
DSSK	<i>Dariya Sahib: Saint of Bihar</i> , K.N. Upadhyaya.
DSZ	<i>The Divine Songs of Zarathustra</i> , I.J.S. Taraporewala.
DTBP	<i>Debate in Tibetan Buddhism</i> , Daniel E. Perdue.
DZ1–1487	<i>Dào zàng</i> , refers to the <i>Zhèngtǒng dào zàng</i> , 1487 titles in 60 vols.
EBBC	“Eightfold Puja”.
EBRB	<i>Encyclopedia of Buddhism</i> , 2 vols., ed. Robert Buswell.
EDSB	<i>Early Daoist Scriptures</i> , Stephen Bokenkamp.
EDYF	<i>Encyclopedic Dictionary of Yoga</i> , Georg Feuerstein.
EI1–12	<i>Encyclopaedia of Islam</i> , 12 vols., ed. H.A.R. Gibb <i>et al.</i>
EIM	<i>Early Islamic Mysticism</i> , Michael Sells.
EKD	<i>The Early Kabbalah</i> , Joseph Dan & Ronald Kiener.
EKTG	<i>Ehyeh: A Kabbalah for Tomorrow</i> , Arthur Green.
ESHS1–4	<i>Sancti Ephraemi Syri Hymni et Sermones</i> , 4 vols., T.J. Lamy.
ET1–2	<i>The Encyclopedia of Taoism</i> , 2 vols., ed. Fabrizio Pregadio.
ETSM	<i>The Encyclopedia of Tibetan Symbols and Motifs</i> , Robert Beer.
EVV1–3	<i>The Entrance to the Vinaya</i> , 3 vols., P. Vajiranyanavarorasa.
FFF	<i>Fragments of a Faith Forgotten</i> , G.R.S. Mead.
FFNA	<i>Fawā'id al-Fu'ād</i> , Nizām al-Dīn Awliyā', Kvājah Amīr Ḥasan 'Alā Sijzī & Khvājah Ḥasan Šānī Nizāmī.
FHTS	<i>Fī Ḥālat al-Ṭufūliyah</i> , Shihāb al-Dīn Suhrawardī, ed. Ḥ. Mufīd.
FJF	<i>Fawā'ih al-Jamāl wa-Fawātiḥ al-Falāl</i> , Najm al-Dīn Kubrā, ed. Fritz Meir.
FKG	<i>The Feats of the Knowers of God</i> , Shams al-Dīn Aḥmad-e Aflākī, tr. John O' Kane.
FMIA1–9	<i>Futūḥāt al-Makkīyah</i> , 9 vols., Muḥyī al-Dīn ibn al-'Arabī, ed. Aḥmad Shams al-Dīn.
FNI1–15	<i>Farhang-i Nūrbakhsh: Iṣṭilāḥāt-i Taṣawwuf</i> , 15 vols., J. Nūrbakhsh.
FOSA	<i>The Flower Adornment Sutra Chapter 40</i> , tr. Mark Andrews.
FSHH	<i>Falakī-i-Shirwānī: His Times, Life, and Works</i> , Hādī Hasan.
FSJJ	<i>First Step of Jainism</i> , Jaina Education Committee.



FSSA	“Why Fast?” Rabbi Shraga Simmons.
GC	“Die Gedichte Cyrillonas,” G.S. Bickell.
GCK	<i>Ghazālī’s Book of Counsel for Kings</i> , tr. F.R.C. Bagley.
GJ	<i>The Gospel of Jesus</i> , John Davidson.
GKP	<i>Gāyathrī</i> , K. Padmanabhan.
GKTM	<i>The Gelug-Kagyü Tradition of Mahamudra</i> , The Dalai Lama & Alexander Berzin.
GLMN	<i>Ghiyāth al-Lughāt</i> , Mawlānā Giyās al-Dīn.
GMS	<i>Al-Ghazālī the Mystic</i> , Margaret Smith.
GPMML	<i>Guide for the Perplexed</i> , Moses Maimonides, tr. M. Friedlander.
GREB	<i>Ba Shi Ba Fo Da Chan Hui Wen: Great Repentance of the Eighty-Eight Buddhas</i> .
GRPS	<i>Guru Ravidas: The Philosopher’s Stone</i> , K.N. Upadhyaya.
GRS	<i>Maṣnavī-i Gulshan-i Rāz</i> , Shaykh Maḥmūd Shabistarī, ed. Aḥmad Muḥammad Mullāyārī.
GRSS	<i>Gulshan-i Raz</i> , tr. E.H. Whinfield.
GRT1–3	<i>Genesis Rabbah</i> , 3 vols., ed. Chanoch Albeck & J. Theodor.
GSR	<i>Gnosis on the Silk Road</i> , tr. H-J. Klimkeit.
GST	<i>Glossary of Sufi Technical Terms</i> , ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Qāshānī, tr. Nabil Safwat (English).
GSTA	<i>Glossary of Sufi Technical Terms</i> , ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Qāshānī, tr. Nabil Safwat (Arabic).
GTR	<i>The Gnostics and Their Remains</i> , C.W. King.
HA	<i>Maṣnavī Haft Awrang</i> , ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Jāmī, ed. M.M. Gīlānī.
HASS	<i>Hajj</i> , Ali Shariati, tr. Somayyah & Yaser.
HHG	<i>The First Book of the Ḥadīqatu’l-Ḥaqīqat</i> , Ḥakīm Abū’l-Majd Majdūd Sanā’ī of Ghazna, tr. J. Stephenson (English).
HHGP	<i>The First Book of the Ḥadīqatu’l-Ḥaqīqat</i> , Ḥakīm Abū’l-Majd Majdūd Sanā’ī of Ghazna, ed. J. Stephenson (Persian).
HHS	<i>Ḥadīqat al-Ḥaqīqat wa Sharḥ at al-Ṭarīqat</i> , Abū al-Majd Majdūd Sanā’ī, ed. Mudarris Riḏavī.
HJS1–2	<i>Hopi Journal of Alexander M. Stephen</i> , 2 vols., ed. E.C. Parsons.
HM	<i>Ḥadīth Mālik Muwaṭṭa’</i> .
HMBB	<i>The Handbook for Mankind</i> , Bhikkhu Buddhadasa.
HNAA	<i>Ḥayyei ha-Nefesh</i> , Abraham Abulafia.
HNAC	“What Happened on the Ninth of Av”; chabad.org.
HNMJ	<i>The Holy Name: Mysticism in Judaism</i> , Miriam Bokser Caravella.
HRMC	<i>Hawaiian Religion &amp; Magic</i> , Scott Cunningham.
HSB	<i>Hadith Sahih al-Bukhari</i> , tr. Muhsin Khan.
HSI1–2	<i>A History of Sufism in India</i> , 2 vols., Saiyid Athar Abbas Rizvi.
HSL1–2	<i>The Heritage of Sufism</i> , 2 vols., ed. Leonard Lewisohn.
HSM	<i>Hadith Sahih Muslim</i> , tr. Abdul Hamid Siddiqi.
HSS	<i>Ḥālāt va Sukhanān-i Abū Sa’īd-i Abū al-Khayr</i> , ed. M.R.S. Kadkanī.

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- HTAE *Hindu Tales*, H. Jacobi, tr. John Jacob Meyer.
- HWW1–2 *Hindu World*, 2 vols., Benjamin Walker.
- HYPM *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*, Swami Muktibodhananda & Swami Satyananda Saraswati.
- IADS1–2 *Isaaci Antiochi, Doctoris Syrorum, Opera Omnia*, 2 vols., G.S. Bickell.
- ICSC *Como interpretan los Chiripá la danza ritual*, León Cádogan.
- ID *Icanchu's Drum*, Lawrence Sullivan.
- IDL *Introduction to the Devout Life*, St Francis de Sales, tr. M. Day.
- IEZB *The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Zen Buddhism*, Helen Baroni.
- IKMH *An Introduction to the Kabbalah*, Moshe Hallamish, tr. Ruth Bar-Ilan & Ora Wiskind-Elper.
- ITSW *Introduction to Tantra Śāstra*, John Woodroffe.
- IUDG1–5 *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, 5 vols., Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, ed. 'Allāmah Zīn al-Dīn Abī al-Faḍl al-'Irāqī.
- JB *The Jerusalem Bible*.
- JCL *Tanakh: The Holy Scriptures; in The CD-ROM Judaic Classics Library*.
- JE *Jewish Encyclopedia*.
- JFAH "Some Judaeo-Arabic Fragments of Rabbi Abraham he-Ḥasīd, The Jewish Sufi," Paul Fenton.
- JKLM *Joseph Karo: Lawyer and Mystic*, R.J. Zwi Werblowsky.
- JMH1–3 *Jāmi' al-Ṣaghīr*, 3 vols., comp. Jalāl al-Dīn 'Abd al-Raḥman ibn Abī Bakr Suyūṭī, ed. Ḥasan Zarruq *et al.*
- JPP1–2 *Jain Philosophy and Practice*, 2 vols., comp. Jaina Education Committee.
- JPS1–2 *JPS Hebrew-English Tanakh*, 2 vols.; Jewish Publication Society.
- JRMU *Jaina-rūpa-maṇḍana*, Umakant Premanand Shah.
- JS1–2 *Jewish Spirituality*, 2 vols., ed. Arthur Green.
- JSB1–2 *Jagjīvan Sāhib kī Bānī*, 2 vols.; Belvedere.
- JSBB1–7 *The Jātaka or Stories of the Buddha's Former Births*, 7 vols., ed. E.B. Cowells.
- JY1–315 *Dào zàng jī yāo*, 315 titles in 10 vols., ed. Chén Dàlì *et al.*
- JYMS *Jaina Yoga*, R. Williams.
- KA1–10 *Kashf al-Asrār va-'Uddat al-Abrār*, 10 vols., Abū al-Faḍl Rashīd al-Dīn Maybudī, ed. 'Alī Aṣghar Ḥikmat.
- KB *The Jerusalem Bible*, English text rev. & ed. Harold Fisch.
- KBS *Kullīyāt-i Bulleh Shāh*, Faqīr Muḥammad.
- KBSA *Kalām-i Bulleh Shāh*, ed. Naẓīr Aḥmad.
- KDRM *Al-Kawākib al-Durrīyah fī Tarājīm al-Sādah al-Ṣūfīyah*, 'Abd al-Ra'ūf al-Munāwī.
- KDT1–2 *Al-Kawākib al-Durriyyah fī Tarājīm al-Sādah al-Ṣūfīyyah*, 2 vols., Muḥammad 'Abd al-Ra'ūf al-Munāwī.
- KFF *Kitāb Fīhi mā Fīhi*, Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, ed. B. Furūzānfar.

KG	<i>Kabīr Granthāvalī</i> , ed. Shyām Sundardās.
KGGL	<i>The King of Glorious Sutras</i> , tr. Losang Dawa.
KGME	<i>Kabir: The Great Mystic</i> , I.A. Ezekiel.
KHI	<i>Kullīyāt-i Shaykh Fakhr al-dīn Ibrāhīm Hamadānī ‘Irāqī</i> , ed. Sa‘īd Nafīsī.
KI	<i>The Koran Interpreted</i> , 2 vols., tr. A.J. Arberry.
KIFT1–4	<i>Kashshāf Iṣṭilāḥāt al-Funūn</i> , 4 vols., Muḥammad ‘Alī ibn ‘Alī al-Tahānawī, ed. Aḥmad Ḥasan Basaj.
KJV	<i>The Bible: Authorized King James Version</i> .
KLTA	<i>Kitāb al-Lum‘ fī al-Taṣawwuf</i> , Abū Naṣr al-Sarrāj, ed. R.A. Nicholson (Arabic).
KM	<i>Kashf al-Mahjūb</i> , al-Hujwīrī, tr. R.A. Nicholson.
KMFK	<i>Kalimāt-i Maknūnah</i> , Fayḡ Kāshānī, ed. ‘Alī ‘Alizādah.
KMM	<i>Kashf al-Mahjūb</i> , Hujwīrī, ed. V.A. Zhukovsky.
KNNR	<i>Khuddaka Nikaya</i> , tr. Narada Thera.
KNTB	<i>Khuddaka Nikaya</i> , tr. Thanissaro Bhikkhu.
KPA	<i>The Koran: With a Parallel Arabic Text</i> , tr. N.J. Dawood.
KSB	<i>Kabīr Sāhib kā Bījak</i> ; Belvedere.
KSBA	<i>Kullīyāt-i Shaykh Bahā’ī</i> , Bahā’ al-Dīn Muḥammad ‘Āmilī, ed. Ghulām Ḥusayn Jawāhirī.
KSD1–10	<i>Kullīyāt-i Shams yā Dīvān-i Kabīr</i> , 10 vols., ed. B. Furūzānfar.
KSMF	<i>Kullīyāt-i Sa’dī</i> , Muṣliḥ al-Dīn Sa’dī, ed. M. Ali Foroughi.
KSMN	<i>Kullīyāt-i Ṣā’ib</i> , Ṣā’ib Tabrizī.
KSS	<i>Kabīr Sākhī Sangrah</i> ; Belvedere.
KSS1–4	<i>Kabīr Sāhib kī Shabdāvalī</i> , 4 vols.; Belvedere.
KSSS	<i>Kullīyāt-i Sa’dī</i> , Shaykh Muṣliḥ Dīn Sa’dī Shīrazī.
KTHB	<i>Kepelino’s Traditions of Hawaii</i> , tr. Martha Beckwith.
KTJ	<i>Kitāb al-Ta’rīfāt</i> , al-Jurjānī, ed. ‘Adil Anwar Khidr.
KWGN	<i>Kabir: The Weaver of God’s Name</i> , V.K. Sethi.
LDAC	<i>The Ladder of Divine Ascent</i> , John Klimakos, tr. Archimandrite Lazarus.
LDSV	<i>Lame Deer</i> , John (Fire) Lame Deer & Richard Erdoes.
LDT	<i>Letters of Direction</i> , Abbé de Tourville, tr. Lucy Menzies.
LGFS	<i>The Love of God</i> , St Francis de Sales, tr. Vincent Kerns.
LGMD	<i>Laṭīfah-ī Ghaybī</i> , Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Dārābī.
LHP1–2	“Palladius: The Lausiac History,” 2 parts, Dom Cuthbert Butler.
LJLG	<i>Legends of the Jews</i> , 7 vols., Louis Ginzberg.
LJT	<i>Lǎojūn jièjīng</i> , tr. Silfong Tsun.
LMD	<i>Lughat-Nāmāh</i> , ‘Alī Akbar Dihkhudā.
LOSM	<i>Light on Sant Mat</i> , Maharaj Charan Singh.
LPB1–4	<i>A Literary History of Persia</i> , 4 vols., Edward G. Browne.
LPD	<i>A Letter of Private Direction and Other Treatises</i> , tr. J. Griffiths.
LPH	<i>The Ladder of Perfection</i> , Walter Hilton, tr. Leo Sherley Price.
LSOC	<i>The Lotus Sutra and Its Opening and Closing Sutras</i> , tr. B. Watson.

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LTII	<i>Left to Tell</i> , Immaculée Ilibagiza.
LTIT	<i>Lao-tzu and the Tao-te-ching</i> , ed. L. Kohn & M. LaFargue.
LWK1–5	“The Lore of the Whare-kohanga,” 5 parts, Elsdon Best.
LXX	<i>The Septuagint</i> , C3rd–2nd BCE (Greek).
MAA	“The Mythological Acts of the Apostles,” A.S. Lewis.
MARB	<i>Mashrab al-Arwāḥ</i> , Rūzbihān Baqlī, ed. ‘Āsim Ibrāhīm al-Kayālī.
MASA1–2	<i>Manāqib al-‘Ārifīn</i> , 2 vols., al-Aflākī al-‘Ārifī, ed. Taḥsīn Yāzījī.
MBS	<i>Mīrābāi kī Shabdāvalī</i> ; Belvedere.
MCDM	<i>Los mitos de creación y de destrucción del mundo</i> , Curt Nimuendajú, ed. Jürgen Riester.
MDBB	<i>Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha</i> , tr. Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli, ed. & rev. Bhikkhu Bodhi.
MDLS	<i>Mira: The Divine Lover</i> , V.K. Sethi.
MEAA	<i>The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia</i> , Moshe Idel.
MEM	“Mesopotamian Elements in Manichaeism,” G. Widengren.
MERM	<i>Encyclopedia of Religion</i> , 15 vols., ed. Lindsay Jones.
MFC	<i>Mithras: The Fellow in the Cap</i> , E. Wynne-Tyson.
MGID	<i>The Myths and Gods of India</i> , Alain Daniélou.
MGK	<i>The Meaning of the Glorious Koran</i> , Marmaduke Pickthall.
MHJM	<i>The Mystic Heart of Judaism</i> , Miriam Bokser Caravella.
MHK	<i>Miṣbāḥ al-Hidāyah wa-Miftāḥ al-Kifāyah</i> , ‘Izz al-Dīn Maḥmūd Qāshānī, ed. Jalāl al-Dīn Humāī.
MHM	<i>Maṣā’ib-i Hallāj</i> , Louis Massignon, tr. Dhiyā’ al-Dīn Dihshīrī.
MHN	<i>Morals for the Heart</i> , tr. Bruce Lawrence.
MIG	<i>Mi’yār al-‘Ilm (Tarjamah)</i> , al-Imām Ghazālī.
MIMM	<i>Mirṣād al-‘Ibād min al-Mabda’ ilā al-Ma’ād</i> , Najm al-Dīn Rāzī Dāyah, ed. Muḥammad Riyāḥī.
MJR1–8	<i>The Mathnawī of Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī</i> , 8 vols., tr. R.A. Nicholson.
ML	<i>Manichaean Literature</i> , J.P. Asmussen.
MLRE	<i>Manichaeism in the Later Roman Empire</i> , S.N.C. Lieu.
MM1–3	“Mitteliranische Manichaica aus Chinesisch-Turkestan,” 3 vols., F.C. Andreas & W.B. Henning.
MMJR	<i>Maktūbāt-i Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī</i> , ed. Tawfīq H. Subḥānī.
MMMh	<i>The Marathon Monks of Mount Hiei</i> , John Stevens.
MMS	<i>Sri Guru Granth Sahib: English and Punjabi Translation</i> , 8 vols., tr. Manmohan Singh.
MNFA	<i>Muṣībāt Nāmah</i> , Farīd al-Dīn ‘Aṭṭār Nīshābūrī, ed. Nūrānī Viṣāl.
MNNA	<i>The Mythology of Native North America</i> , D. Leeming & J. Page.
MNTB	<i>Majjhima Nikaya</i> , tr. Thanissaro Bhikkhu.
MOI	<i>The Mystics of Islam</i> , R.A. Nicholson.
MP1–2	<i>Mystical Poems of Rumi</i> , 2 vols., tr. A.J. Arberry.
MPB	<i>A Manichaean Psalm-Book</i> , Part II, tr. C.R.C. Allberry.
MQ	<i>The Mystic Quest</i> , David Ariel.
MRJA	“Maori Religion,” Johannes Andersen.

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MRM1–2	<i>Maori Religion and Mythology</i> , 2 parts, Elsdon Best.
MRMS	<i>Maori Religion and Mythology</i> , Edward Shortland.
MRS1–6	<i>Mahābhārata</i> , 6 vols., tr. Ramnarayandatta Shastri Pandeya.
MSPC	<i>My Submission</i> , Maharaj Sawan Singh.
MSS	<i>Mīrā Sudhā Sindhu</i> .
MSSC	<i>Mysticism</i> , Evelyn Underhill.
MSTA	<i>Maqālāt-i Shams Tabrīzī</i> , ed. Muḥammad ‘Alī Muwaḥḥhid.
MTAN	<i>Manṭiq al-Ṭayr</i> , Shaykh ‘Aṭṭār Nīshābūrī, ed. M.R.S. Kadkanī.
MTGS	<i>Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism</i> , Gershom Scholem.
MTSB	<i>Midrash Tanḥuma</i> , ed. Solomon Buber.
MUM	<i>Minor Upanishads</i> , tr. Swami Madhavananda.
MV1–12	<i>The Mahabharata of Krishna-Dwaipayana Vyasa</i> , 12 vols., tr. Kisari Mohan Ganguli.
NAKU	<i>Niyamasara</i> , Shri Kunda Kunda Āchārya, tr. Uggar Sain.
NAMZ	<i>Native American Mythology</i> , Patricia Lynch & Jeremy Roberts.
NARG	<i>Native American Religions</i> , Sam D. Gill.
NAWB	“Notes on the Art of War,” 4 parts, Elsdon Best.
NDBB	<i>The Numerical Discourses of the Buddha</i> , tr. Bhikkhu Bodhi.
NEB	<i>The New English Bible</i> .
NHL	<i>The Nag Hammadi Library in English</i> , ed. James Robinson.
NHS15	<i>Nag Hammadi Studies</i> XV, ed. Birger Pearson.
NHS20	<i>Nag Hammadi Studies</i> XX, ed. Bentley Layton.
NHS21	<i>Nag Hammadi Studies</i> XXI, ed. Bentley Layton.
NHS22	<i>Nag Hammadi Studies</i> XXII, ed. Harold Attridge.
NHS28	<i>Nag Hammadi Studies</i> XXVIII, ed. Charles Hedrick.
NJB	<i>The New Jerusalem Bible</i> .
NKD	<i>Nāṣir-i Khusraw</i> , tr. P.L. Wilson & G.R. Aavani, ed. H. Nasr.
NKK1–2	<i>Nānā i ke Kumu</i> , 2 vols., M.K. Pukui, E.W. Haertig & C. Lee.
NMBF	<i>Navajo Medicine Bundles or Jish</i> , C. Frisbie.
NPII1–14	<i>Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers</i> , Series 2, 14 vols., ed. P. Schaff & H. Wace.
NR1–2	<i>The Nestorians and Their Rituals</i> , 2 vols., G.P. Badger.
NRMP	<i>Numbers Rabbah</i> ; Moriah Press.
NSJ	<i>New Sayings of Jesus and Fragment of a Lost Gospel from Oxyrhynchus</i> , tr. Bernard Grenfell & Arthur Hunt.
NST1–2	<i>The Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism</i> , 2 vols., Dudjom Rinpoche Jigdral Yeshe Dorje, tr. Gyurme Dorje & M. Kapstein.
NUJ	<i>Nafahāt al-Uns</i> , ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Jāmī, ed. Maḥdī Tawhīdīpūr.
NVJC	<i>New Vistas on Early Judaism and Christianity</i> , ed. Lorenzo DiTommaso & Gerbern S. Oegema.
OCC	<i>Origen Contra Celsum</i> , Origen, tr. H. Chadwick.
ODB	<i>Oxford Dictionary of Buddhism</i> , Damien Keown.
OFLG1–14	<i>Obras del V.P.M. Fray Luis de Granada, de la Orden de Santo Domingo</i> , 14 vols., ed. Fray Justo Cuervo.

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OG	<i>The Other Gospels</i> , ed. R. Cameron.
OHL	<i>Origen: Homilies on Leviticus</i> , tr. G.W. Barkley.
OJF1–2	<i>Obras espirituales del V.P. Presentado Fr. Juan Falconi</i> , 2 vols., Fray Juan Falconi de Bustamante.
OLAG	<i>The Oxyrhynchus Logia and the Apocryphal Gospels</i> , C. Taylor.
OLBE	<i>Oetingers Leben und Briefe</i> , Karl Christian Eduard Ehmann.
ONMC	<i>Or Ne'erav</i> , Moses Cordovero.
OPJ	<i>On the Prayer of Jesus</i> , Ignatius Brianchaninov, tr. Father Lazarus Moore (2006 edn.).
OSPW	“On the Origin and Significance of the Prayer Wheel According to Two Nineteenth-Century Tibetan Literary Sources,” D. Martin.
PAAT	<i>Perush ha-Aggadot le-Rav 'Azriel</i> , ed. Isaiah Tishby.
PAS	<i>8 Chapters on Perfection &amp; Angels' Song</i> , Walter Hilton, tr. Rosemary Dorward.
PBD	<i>Buddhist Dictionary</i> , Ven. Nyanatiloka.
PCBW	<i>Pueblo Cultures</i> , Barton Wright.
PCT1–5	<i>The Philokalia</i> , 4 vols., tr. G.E.H. Palmer, P. Sherrard & K. Ware.
PCW1–10	<i>Philo</i> , 10 vols., tr. F.H. Colson & G.H. Whitaker.
PDB	<i>The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism</i> , R. Buswell & D. Lopez.
PES	<i>Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis</i> , tr. F. Williams.
PG1–161	<i>Patrologiae cursus completus ... Series Graeca</i> , 161 vols., ed. J.-P. Migne.
PGBO	<i>The Path of God's Bondsmen from Origin to Return</i> , tr. H. Algar.
PJMS	“La Prière à Jésus ou le Mystère de la spiritualité monastique orthodoxe,” Élisabeth Behr-Sigel.
PMS1–5	<i>Philosophy of the Masters</i> , 5 vols., Huzur Maharaj Sawan Singh.
PNW	<i>The Power of the Name</i> , Kallistos Ware.
PSB1–3	<i>Paltū Sāhib kī Bānī</i> , 3 vols.; Belvedere.
PSHC	<i>Physician of the Soul, Healer of the Cosmos</i> , Lawrence Fine.
PSND	<i>Pravacana-sārodddhara</i> , Nemicandra.
PSSY	“Iggeres HaGra – The Vilna Gaon's Letter,” Rabbi Eliyahu.
PSWE	<i>Pietists: Selected Writings</i> , ed. Peter C. Erb.
PTSA1–6	<i>The Aṅguttara-nikāya</i> , 6 vols., ed. R. Morris & E. Hardy.
PTSD1–3	<i>The Dīgha-nikāya</i> , 3 vols., ed. T.W. Rhys Davids & J.E. Carpenter.
PTSJ1–7	<i>Jātaka with Commentary</i> , 7 vols., ed. V. Fausbøll.
PTSK1–2	<i>Kathāvatthu</i> , 2 vols., ed. Arnold C. Taylor.
PTSM1–4	<i>The Majjhima-nikāya</i> , 4 vols., ed. V. Trenckner & R. Chalmers.
PTSN	<i>Suttanipāta</i> , ed. D. Anderson & Helmer Smith.
PTSQ	<i>Milindapañha</i> , ed. V. Trenckner.
PTSS1–6	<i>Samyutta-nikāya</i> , 6 vols., ed. L. Feer.
PTSV1–5	<i>Vinaya-piṭaka</i> , 5 vols., ed. H. Oldenberg.
PU	<i>The Principal Upaniṣads</i> , tr. S. Radhakrishnan.
PWES	<i>Profiles in Wisdom</i> , Steven McFadden.
PWOW	<i>The Pursuit of Wisdom</i> , tr. James A. Walsh.



QAGP	<i>Questions and Answers on Genesis</i> , Philo Judaeus, tr. R. Marcus.
RAAA1–2	<i>Majmū'ah-ī Rasā'il-i Fārsī Khwājah 'Abd Allāh Anṣārī</i> , 2 vols., ed. Muḥammad Sarūr Mawlāy.
RAH	<i>Refutation of All Heresies</i> , Hippolytus, tr. S.D.F. Salmond.
RCE1–2	<i>Religious Celebrations</i> , 2 vols., ed. J. Gordon Melton.
RERR	<i>Radical Egalitarianism</i> , ed. F. Aulino, M. Goheen & S.J. Tambiah.
RHRT	<i>Religions of the Hellenistic-Roman Age</i> , Antonia Tripolitis.
RHVM	<i>Reshit Hokhmah</i> , Elijah de Vidas (Muncacz, 1926).
RI	<i>The Religion of Islām</i> , Maulānā Muḥammad 'Alī.
RIS	<i>Rubaiyat-i-Sarmad</i> , tr. Faḡl Maḥmūd Asīrī (English).
RJK	<i>Rawḍāt al-Jannāt</i> , Muḥammad Bāqir Khwānsārī.
RKSS	<i>Ratna-karaṇḍa-śrāvakācāra</i> , Samantabhadra.
RLRI	<i>Risālah-ī Lam'āt va Risālah-ī Iṣṭilāḥāt</i> , 'Irāqī, ed. J. Nūrbakhsh.
RM	<i>Rabī'a the Mystic and her Fellow-Saints in Islam</i> , M. Smith.
RMI	<i>Readings from the Mystics of Islam</i> , M. Smith.
RMP	<i>A Reader in Manichaeism Middle Persian and Parthian</i> , M. Boyce.
RNV1–4	<i>Rasā'il Shāh Nī'matullāhī Valī</i> , 4 vols., ed. Javād Nūrbakhsh.
RQQQ	<i>Al-Risālah al-Qushayrīyah</i> , al-Qushayrī, ed. M. al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī.
RQR	<i>Risālat al-Quds wa Risālah Ghalaṭāt al-Sālikīn</i> , Rūzbihān Baqlī Shīrāzī, ed. Javād Nūrbakhsh.
RRC1–2	<i>Rituals of Rdo-rje-brag</i> , 2 vols., ed. Pema Choden.
RRS	<i>The Revival of Religious Sciences</i> , al-Ghazālī, tr. Bankey Behari.
RSSP	<i>Ratnakaraṇḍaka Śrāvakācāra</i> , Samantabhadra, ed. J.K. Kishor.
RSV	<i>The Holy Bible: The Revised Standard Version</i> .
RVMD	<i>Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki</i> , M.N. Dutt.
RVMV	<i>The Ramayana of Valmiki</i> , Makhan Lal Sen.
S1–	Numbered manuscripts discovered at Dūnhuáng (China), now in the Stein Collection at The British Library, London (Chinese).
SAAD	<i>Śrāvakācāra</i> , Ācārya Amitagati, ed. Bhagchandra Jain.
SAC	“Shamanism Among the Avá-Chiripá,” Miguel Bartolomé.
SB1–18	<i>Śrīmad Bhāgavatam of Kṛṣṇa-Dvaipāyana Vyāsa</i> , 18 vols., A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada.
SBAT	<i>Sar Bachan: An Abstract of the Teachings of Soami Ji Maharaj</i> .
SBB	<i>Sahajobāī kī Bānī</i> ; Belvedere.
SBE	<i>Sultan Bahu</i> , J.R. Puri & K.S. Khak.
SBE31	<i>The Zend-Avesta</i> , Part III, tr. L.H. Mills.
SBE33	<i>The Minor Law Books</i> , tr. Julius Jolly.
SBE45	<i>Jaina Sutras</i> , Part II, tr. Hermann Jacobi.
SBE5	<i>Pahlavi Texts</i> , Part I, <i>The Bundahis, Bahman Yast, and Shâyast Lâ-Shâyast</i> , tr. E.W. West.
SBHB	<i>Sant Bānī</i> , Hem Chandra Bhargava.
SBP	<i>Sār Bachan Chhand-Band (Sār Bachan Poetry)</i> , Swāmī Shiv Dayāl Singh.
SBSU	<i>Sā'in Bulleh Shāh</i> .

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SBU	<i>Ḥaẓrat Sulṭān Bāhū.</i>
SBWG	<i>Sṛimad Bhagavatam</i> , tr. Swami Prabhavananda.
SCM1–2	“Spiritual Concepts of the Maori,” 2 parts, Elsdon Best.
SCVJ	<i>Śrāvākācāra</i> , Vasunandin, ed. Hiralal Jain.
SD1–2	<i>Spiritual Discourses</i> , 2 vols., Maharaj Charan Singh.
SDAM	<i>Sāgāra-dharmāmṛta</i> , Āśādhara.
SDKD	<i>Śrāddha-dina-kṛtya</i> , Devendra.
SEIG	<i>A Shorter Encyclopedia of Islam</i> , H.A.R. Gibb & J.H. Kramers.
SER	<i>The Spiritual Espousals</i> , Jan van Ruysbroek, tr. Eric Colledge.
SGEP	<i>Seeing God Everywhere</i> , Swami Shraddhananda.
SGPT	<i>The Scripture on Great Peace</i> , Barbara Hendrischke.
SGR	<i>Mafātiḥ al-Iʿjāz fī Sharḥ-i Gulshan-i Rāz-i Maḥmūd Shabistārī</i> , Shaykh Muḥammad Lāhijī, ed. Kayvān Samīʿī.
SGRV	<i>Sant Guru Ravidās Vāṇī</i> , ed. B.P. Sharmā.
SHME	<i>Fifty Spiritual Homilies of St. Macarius</i> , tr. A.J. Mason.
SIM	<i>Studies in Islamic Mysticism</i> , R.A. Nicholson.
SJIT	<i>Sīshjīū zhāng jīng</i> , tr. Silfong Tsun.
SKQ	<i>Sharḥ-i Aḥvāl va-Āthār va-Dubaytiḥā-yi Bābā Ṭāhir ʿUriyān</i> , ʿAyn al-Quḍāt Hamadānī, ed. Javād Maqsūd.
SKSM	<i>Satt Kabīr kī Shabdāvalī</i> , ed. Shri Manilal Tulsidas Mehta.
SMIK1–13	<i>The Sufi Message of Hazrat Inayat Khan</i> , 13 vols.
SMLD	<i>Sarmad: Martyr to Love Divine</i> , Isaac Ezekiel.
SMMB	<i>Spiritual and Mental Concepts of the Māori</i> , Elsdon Best.
SNPM	<i>Secret Native American Pathways</i> Thomas Mails.
SNTB	<i>Samyutta Nikaya</i> , tr. Thanissaro Bhikkhu.
SNVF	<i>The Sutta-Nipāta: A Collection of Discourses</i> , tr. V. Fausböll.
SOL	<i>Sayings of Our Lord</i> , B.P. Grenfell & A.S. Hunt.
SOU	<i>Signs of The Unseen</i> , tr. W.M. Thackston Jr.
SPK	<i>The Sufi Path of Knowledge</i> , William Chittick.
SPL	<i>The Sufi Path of Love</i> , William Chittick.
SPLT	<i>Saint Paltu: His Life and Teachings</i> , Isaac Ezekiel.
SPM	<i>The Sacrament of the Present Moment</i> , J.-P. de Caussade, tr. K. Muggeridge.
SPS1–4	<i>Śiva Purāṇa</i> , 4 vols., tr. J.L. Shastri.
SRK1–5	<i>Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita</i> , 5 vols., Mahendra Nath Gupta.
SS1–8	<i>The Shurangama Sutra</i> , 8 vols., tr. Buddhist Text Translation Society.
SSE1–15	<i>Sufi Symbolism: The Nurbakhsh Encyclopedia of Sufi Terminology</i> , 15 vols., Dr Javad Nurbakhsh, tr. T. Graham <i>et al.</i>
SSG1–2	<i>Shrī Sakal Santa Gāthā</i> , 2 vols., ed. R.R. Gosavi.
SSG1–6	<i>Shirei Shlomo ben Yehuda ibn Gebirol</i> , 5 vols., ed. Hayyim Bialik & Yehoshuʿa Ravnitzky.
SSI1–10	<i>Sacred Songs of India</i> , 10 vols., V.K. Subramanian.



SSJV	<i>Samaṇ Suttaṃ</i> , comp. Jinēndra Varṇī, tr. T.K. Tukol & K.K. Dixit.
SSM1–3	<i>Studies of the Spanish Mystics</i> , 3 vols., E. Allison Peers.
SSRF	<i>Safed Spirituality</i> , tr. Lawrence Fine.
SSSP	<i>Soto School Scriptures for Daily Services and Practice</i> , T.G. Foulk.
STG1–3	<i>Sārtha Tukārām Gāthā</i> , 3 vols., Tukārām, ed. P.N. Joshi.
STTA	<i>Summa Theologica</i> , St Thomas Aquinas, tr. Fathers of the English Dominican Province.
SUAR	<i>The Saṃnyāsa Upaniṣad-s</i> , tr. A.A. Ramanathan.
SUPP	<i>Śramaṇopāsaka-pratimā-pañcāśaka</i> , Haribhadra.
SVR1–2	<i>Śrīmad Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa</i> , 2 vols.; Gita Press.
SVRS	<i>Śrāddha-vidhi</i> , Ratnaśekhara.
SVSL	‘ <i>Umar ibn al-Fāriḍ</i> , tr. Th. Emil Homerin.
T1–100	<i>Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō</i> , 100 vols., ed. Takakusu Junjirō & Watanabe Kaigokyu.
TAN1–2	<i>Tadhkiratu ‘l-Awliya</i> , 2 parts, ed. R.A. Nicholson.
TAT	<i>Taṣawwuf va-Adabīyāt-i Taṣawwuf</i> , Y.E. Bertels, tr. Sirus Izadi.
TBLD	<i>The Long Discourses of the Buddha</i> , tr. Maurice Walshe.
TBZB	<i>The Talmud: Selected Writings</i> , Ben Zion Bokser.
TCA1–7	<i>Torah Commentary</i> , 7 vols., Bachya ben Asher, tr. Eliyahu Munk.
TCSD	<i>Tukaram: The Ceaseless Song of Devotion</i> , Chandravati Rajwade.
TDKD	<i>Treasure of the Dhamma</i> , K. Sri Dhammananda.
TDMC	<i>Tomer Devorah</i> , Moses Cordovero.
TEAK	<i>The Taoist Experience: An Anthology</i> , Livia Kohn.
TGHI–3	<i>Thrice-Greatest Hermes</i> , 3 vols., G.R.S. Mead.
TK1–10	<i>The Treasury of Knowledge</i> , 10 vols., Jamgön Kongtrul Lodrö Tayé, tr. Kalu Rinpoché Translation Group.
TMG	“The Tohunga Maori,” Walter Gudgeon.
TMMS	<i>Taoist Meditation</i> , Isabelle Robinet, tr. J.F. Pas & N.J. Girardot.
TMU	<i>Thirty Minor Upaniṣads</i> , tr. K. Narayanasvami Aiyar.
TOP	<i>The Treatise of the Pool: Al-Maqala al-Ḥawḍiyya</i> , ‘Obadyah Maimonides, tr. Paul Fenton.
TOS	<i>Tayyibat</i> , tr. Lucas White King.
TPA1–2	<i>Traditions of the Prophet (Ahadith)</i> , 2 vols. Javad Nurbakhsh, tr. L. Lewisohn & T. Graham.
TPEQ	<i>The Teachings and Practices of the Early Quanzhen Taoist Masters</i> , Stephen Eskildsen.
TPRS	<i>The Thirteen-Petalled Rose</i> , Adin Steinsaltz, tr. Yehuda Hanegbi.
TQH	<i>Tamhīdāt</i> , ‘Ayn al-Quḍat Hamadānī, ed. ‘Afīf ‘Usayrān.
TRAK	<i>Tohunga – The Revival</i> , Samuel Timoti Robinson.
TSAA	<i>Ṭabaqāt al-Šūfīyah</i> , Khwājah ‘Abd Allāh Anṣārī, ed. A.H. Ḥabībī.
TSOA	<i>Francisco de Osuna</i> , tr. Mary E. Giles.
TSH1–2	<i>Tulsī Sāhib Hāthrasvale kī Shabdāvalī</i> , 2 vols.; Belvedere.

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TSP1–6	<i>Triṣaṣṭiśalākāpuruṣacaritra</i> , 6 vols., Hemacandra, tr. H. Johnson.
TSR	<i>The Triumphal Sun</i> , Annemarie Schimmel.
TSUS	<i>Tatvarth Sutra</i> , tr. Upadhaya Shritsagar.
TTCL	<i>Lao Tzu: Tao Te Ching</i> , tr. D.C. Lau.
TTK	<i>Al-Ta'arruf li-Madhhab Ahl al-Taṣawwuf</i> , Abū Bakr Muḥammad Kalābādī, tr. Abū Ibrāhīm Mustamalī Bukhārī.
TTSP	<i>Tertullian: On the Testimony of the Soul and On the 'Prescription' of Heretics</i> , tr. T.H. Bindley.
TTTT	<i>Tikao Talks</i> , Herries Beattie.
TYVL	<i>A Translation of Yoga-Vāsishṭa</i> , tr. K. Nārāyaṇaswāmi Aiyer.
U1–4	<i>The Upanishads</i> , 4 vols., tr. Swami Nikhilananda.
VCSM	<i>Viveka-cūḍāmaṇi of Śrī Śaṅkarācārya</i> , tr. Swāmī Mādhavānanda.
VDCH	<i>Vandanā</i> , Elgiriye Indaratana Maha Thera.
VE	<i>The Vedic Experience</i> , Raimundo Panikkar.
VSSG	<i>The Vairocanābhisaṃbodhi Sutra</i> , tr. Rolf Giebel.
VTP1–2	<i>Vinaya Texts</i> , Parts I & II, tr. T.W. Rhys Davids & H. Oldenberg.
VYV	<i>Vasiṣṭha's Yoga</i> , tr. Swami Venkatesananda.
WBC1–4	<i>The Works of Bernard of Clairvaux: On the Song of Songs</i> , 4 vols., tr. K. Walsh (vols. 1–3) & I.M. Edmonds (vols. 3–4).
WCA1–2	<i>The Writings of Clement of Alexandria</i> , 2 vols., tr. W. Wilson.
WDF	<i>The Wisdom of the Desert Fathers</i> , tr. Benedicta Ward.
WJMA	<i>The Writings of Justin Martyr and Athenagoras</i> , tr. M. Dods <i>et al.</i>
WND1–2	<i>The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin</i> , 2 vols.
WPJ1–4	<i>The Works of Philo Judaeus</i> , 4 vols., tr. C.D. Yonge.
WPW	<i>The Way of a Pilgrim</i> , tr. R.M. French.
WRS1–7	<i>The Complete Works of Richard Sibbes</i> , 7 vols., ed. A. Groshart.
WT1–3	<i>The Writings of Tertullian</i> , 3 vols., tr. S. Thelwall & P. Holmes.
WZ1–3	<i>The Wisdom of the Zohar</i> , 3 vols., arr. F. Lachower & I. Tishby.
YHBI	<i>The Yogaśāstra</i> , 6 fascs., Hemachandra, ed. Vijaya Dharma Sūri.
YSB	<i>Yārī Sāhib kī Ratnāvalī</i> ; Belvedere.
YSHB	<i>Yoga-Śāstra</i> , Hemacandra, ed. Muni Mahārāja Śrī Dharmavijaya & Śāstra Viçārada Jainācārya Śrī Vijaya Dharma Sūri.
YSHG	<i>The Yoga Shastra of Hemachandracharya</i> , tr. A.S. Gopani.
YU	<i>The Yoga Upaniṣads</i> , tr. T.R. S'rīnivāsa Ayyaṅgār.
ZAEM	<i>Zohar: Annotated and Explained</i> , Daniel C. Matt.
ZRZB	<i>Zen Ritual</i> , ed. Steven Heine & Dale S. Wright.
ZSS1–5	<i>The Zohar</i> , 5 vols., tr. Harry Sperling & Maurice Simon.
ZW1–991	<i>Zángwài dàooshū</i> , 991 titles in 36 vols.

## 8.4 RELIGIOUS PRACTICES AND BELIEFS

(‘ABĀ’ – SHARĪ‘AH)

HUMAN BEINGS HAVE SOUGHT THE DIVINE in a variety of ways, but broadly speaking, such means fall into two main categories – outer and inner. God is sought outwardly through religious practices, and inwardly through spiritual practices – although the two are by no means mutually exclusive. Mystics say that since God is within, it is only inner practices that lead to Him. In fact, outer religious practices have often developed as externalizations of what originally began as spiritual practices. This section considers some of these external practices and beliefs, with a particular focus on those that possess some spiritual symbolism, import, or origin.



‘**abā**’ (A/P) *Lit.* cloak; mantle; a shoulder mantle open in the front, worn by Sufis. See **khirqah**, **muraqqa**’.

**abhaya-mudrā** (S), **abhaya-muddā** (Pa) *Lit.* fearless (*abhaya*) gesture (*mudrā*); gesture of fearlessness; a hand and arm gesture communicating fearlessness, protection, benevolence and peace, commonly seen in iconographic representations of the Buddha and celestial *bodhisattvas*; made with a bent right arm raised to shoulder height, with the palm raised, open and facing forwards, with the fingers together; one of a number of symbolic hand gestures with which representations of the Buddha are depicted. The open hand of the *abhaya-mudrā* indicates the absence of any weapon. It conveys peaceable intention based on a fearlessness grown out of enlightenment. The *abhaya-mudrā* is also a characteristic *mudrā* seen in images of Amoghasiddhi, the fifth celestial or *dhyāni buddha*.

According to Buddhist legend, the Buddha made this gesture immediately after he had attained enlightenment. Some time later, the Buddha’s cousin Devadatta, who had been jealous of the Buddha since childhood and who had formed a breakaway movement, tried to murder the Buddha by persuading the mahouts from the royal stables, using threats and enticements, to loose a fierce elephant directly into the Buddha’s path. On the following day, the Buddha, while gathering alms with a small group of his disciples, turned a corner in a narrow street and found himself confronted by the beast. The disciples urged the Buddha to turn back, but the Buddha walked on and, as the elephant approached, he radiated lovingkindness (*mettā*) to the animal and raised his right hand in the *abhaya-mudrā*. This immediately calmed the animal, allowing the Buddha to walk up to it and stroke its head.

See also: **mudrā**.

**āchār(a)** (S/H/Pu), **ācāra** (Pa), **achār** (Pu) *Lit.* conduct, behaviour; manner of life, manner of action; duty, action; customs, practice; especially, good behaviour, good conduct; an established rule of moral conduct and behaviour; religious observances, rites, and ceremonial practices sanctioned by custom; appears in expressions such as *sadāchāra* (good conduct, virtuous behaviour), *upāchāra* (polite or conventional behaviour), *durāchāra* (bad conduct, bad behaviour), *lokāchāra* (customs of the world, common practice, traditional or popular custom).

Many mystics have commented that external religious observances, though seemingly worthy, can actually draw the attention of the mind outside, distracting it from the inner search for real spirituality. Seeing people being misled into thinking that religious rites and ceremonies will help them spiritually,

mystics have often spoken in forthright language. As Ṛishi Vasishṭha tells Rāma in the *Yoga-Vāsishṭha*, a yogic retelling of the *Rāmāyaṇa* epic:

Austerity or penance (*tapas*), charity (*dāna*) and observances of religious vows (*vrata*) do not lead to the realization of the Lord; only the company of holy men and the study of true scriptures are helpful, as they dispel ignorance and delusion. When one is convinced that the Self alone is real, one goes beyond sorrow on the path of liberation.

*Yoga-Vāsishṭha* 3:6.4–6; cf. VYV p.45

Likewise, the *Garuḍa Purāṇa*:

Those who are intent on the performance of the duties (*āchāra*) of their own caste (*svavarṇa*) and stage of life (*āshrama*) do not know the supreme virtue (*param dharma*), and go to ruin with their pride.

*Garuḍa Purāṇa* 2:49.58, in PU p.677

In the Sikh tradition, Guru Nānak similarly says that God cannot be known through religious ceremonies and reading the scriptures:

Through ritual actions (*āchārī*),  
 God cannot be won over;  
 By reciting sacred scriptures,  
 His value cannot be estimated.  
 The eighteen *Purāṇas* and the four *Vedas*  
 do not know His mystery.  
 O Nānak, the true *guru* has shown me the Lord God.

*Guru Nānak, Ādi Granth* 355, AGK

Paltū writes that observances will not lead to liberation:

Vain is the counting of beads,  
 worthless are visits to holy rivers;  
 Empty and profitless is keeping vows,  
 barren are the practices of *yoga*.  
 For rituals and observances (*āchār*) confer no salvation.  
 O Paltū, without the worship of God's Name,  
 all efforts are barren, all methods sterile, all devotion fruitless.

*Paltū, Bānī* 3, *Sākhī* 7, *PSB3* p.74; cf. *SPLT* p.24

Sahajobāi says that religious observances without devotion to the divine Name or creative power confer little advantage, especially when the goal is realization of the Divine:

Without devotion, everything is hollow:

ascetic, sacrificial and religious observances (*āchār*).

Says Sahjo, keep the Lord's Name close to your heart.

*Sahajobāī, Bānī, Nām kā ang 5, SBB p.30*

See also: **āchāra** (►4).

**achelakatva** (S) *Lit.* without (*a*) clothes (*chela*); nakedness, nudity; one of the seven essential practices of a Jain *Digambara* monk who has taken the full mendicant vows (*mahāvratas*); contrasted with *sachelakatva* (clothed).

Whether the mendicant vow of non-possession (*aparigraha*) should include the renunciation of clothing was an issue that contributed to the division of the Jain tradition in the early centuries CE into two main schools: the *Digambaras* ('sky-clad') and the *Shvetāmbaras* ('white-robed').

*Digambaras* maintain that all twenty-four of their *Tīrthankaras* were men who practised *achelakatva* from the time of their renunciation, along with their male mendicant followers. A female *Digambara* mendicant (*āryikā*) takes a less stringent version of the vow of *aparigraha* and wears a white sari. She is regarded as an advanced celibate laywoman who has reached the eleventh and highest *pratimā*, but is unable to attain *moksha* (liberation) in this life. The eleven *pratimās* are stages of increased rigour in observance of the twelve lay vows (*aṇuvratas*). As a result of pressure from the Muslim rulers, by the thirteenth or fourteenth century *Digambaras* had been forced to wear some clothing in public, only practising complete nudity within their own monastic confines. It was only with the advent of several early twentieth-century *Digambara* reformers that the practice of complete nudity was revived.

*Shvetāmbaras* regard some minimal clothing as one of the essentials excluded from the vow of non-possession, like the begging bowl and the whisk broom (*rajoharaṇa*). The whisk broom is used to sweep the ground before them as they walk to avoid killing or maiming small creatures. *Shvetāmbaras* also believe that Mallinātha, the nineteenth *Tīrthankara*, was a woman, and that only the first and the last *Tīrthankaras* (Rishabha and Mahāvīra) practised nudity. During the time of Mahāvīra, only monks who adopted the more extreme monastic rule (*kalpa*), known as *jina-kalpa*, had the option of practising complete *achelakatva*.<sup>1</sup>

See also: **bhaṭṭāraka** (7.1), **Digambara** (7.1), **Nirgrantha** (7.1).

1. See "nudity," *A to Z of Jainism*, AZJW; Padmanabh S. Jain, *Collected Papers*, CPJS pp.315–16.

**adhān** (A), **bāng** (P) *Lit.* announcing; the Muslim call to prayer, given five times a day from the minarets of the mosques by the muezzin (*mu'adhdhin*):

The call to prayer resonates over Islamic communities five times a day, breaking through daily preoccupations and demanding a moment of reflection and self-composure before the Ultimate. The call to prayer includes within it the Islamic witness or testimony (*shahādah*): “I witness that there is no god but God and Muḥammad is his Prophet.” The first statement of the witness, “There is no god but God (*lā ilāha illā Allāh*),”<sup>1</sup> is a quote from the *Qur'ān* and in its recited form is a distillation of the distinctive features of Quranic cadence. The refrains of the call to prayer, wafting over the Islamic community, are perhaps the most immediate and typical feature of Islam that a voyager to an Islamic society will encounter. These chanted cadences resonate over each community five times per day, breaking through daily preoccupations and demanding a moment of reflection before the Ultimate. The verbal, recited affirmation of the oneness of God is another aspect of the ‘orientation’ of the human, through all aspects of the body and soul, toward one point.

*Michael Sells, Early Islamic Mysticism, EIM pp.14–15*

Sufis have generally regarded the call to prayer with respect, just as Christian monks have followed external Christian practices in parallel with their pursuit of the inner life. On occasion, however, mystics such as Rūmī have indicated that the divine lover experiences a higher form of prayer than the ablutions, the *raka'āt* (rounds of prayer), the recitation of the *Qur'ān*, and the bowings, kneelings and prostrations that form a part of ritual prayers. In one of his poems, he speaks of his yearning to meet the spiritual form, the “dream image”, of his “friend”, his master. The blissful intoxication of his longing “burns the door of my mosque” – the inner ‘gateway’ within the body – permitting him to leave his body and meet with the beloved inside, beyond the sphere of “time” and “space”. Utterly unconscious of this world, with neither hand nor tongue nor heart, there is no chance of his performing the ritual prayer correctly:

When at evening prayer everybody lays candle and table,  
 I am there with the dream image of my friend,  
 with grief and sighing and lament.  
 When I perform my ablution with tears,  
 my prayer becomes fiery;  
 It burns the door of my mosque,  
 when my call to prayer (*adhān*) reaches it. . . .



I wonder at the prayer of the intoxicated!  
 Tell me: is this correct?  
 For he does not know time, nor is he aware of space.  
 I wonder, are these two *raka'āt*?  
 I wonder, is this my fourth one?  
 I wonder, which *sūrah* (of the *Qur'ān*) did I recite,  
 since I have no tongue?  
 How did I knock at God's door,  
 since neither hand nor heart remained in me?  
 Since You have carried away heart and hand, O God, give pardon!  
 By God, I do not know how I performed the ritual prayer:  
 whether my genuflection is finished, or who was the *imām*.

*Rūmī, Dīvān-i Shams-i Tabrīz 2831:30053–54, 56–59,*

*KSD6 pp.129–30; cf. in TSR p.357*

Sa'dī indicates the same in a more roundabout manner. He says that the morning call to prayer brings the consciousness of the mystic devotee back to this world after his nightly flight into the heavenly realms. Give him a large draught of the “wine” of divine love, he suggests, so that he may return to unconsciousness of this world, through superconsciousness of the inner beloved:

The morning call to prayer (*bāng*) has been recited,  
 and has awakened the dervish to consciousness:  
 Give him a large measure of wine,  
 so that he may again become unconscious.

*Sa'dī, Ṭayyibāt 178:8, KSMF (210) p.638; cf. TOS p.243*

1. *Qur'ān* 3:62, 47:19, and in many other places with similar phraseology.

**Advent** (L. *Adventus*) The season before Christmas, which generally includes four Sundays, and is observed by many Western Churches as a period of expectancy and celebration of both the birth of Jesus and his second coming (*parousia*) at the end of time, when, according to the doctrine, he will come again to judge the world; a commemoration of the period leading up to the incarnation of the *Logos* as Jesus, according to John's gospel<sup>1</sup> and subsequent Christian theology; from the Latin *Adventus* (coming). Although Advent is a season observed largely by Western Churches, it is matched in some respects by the Nativity Fast of the Eastern Churches.

As a season in the Christian liturgical calendar, the origin of Advent is uncertain. The earliest recorded mention of fasting during the period prior to Christmas seems to have been made by Bishop Gregory of Tours (b.c.538) in his *Ten Books of Histories* (subsequently known as the *History of the*

*Franks*). He relates that Bishop Perpetuus of Tours (*d.c.*490) decreed for his diocese the observance of a fast three days a week until Christmas, beginning with the feast of St Martin on November 11th.<sup>2</sup> For which reason, Advent is also known as St Martin's Lent. St Martin, much venerated in France, was a fourth-century bishop of Tours, with whom hagiographers have associated many miracles.

The practice does not appear to have spread beyond the diocese of Tours until the sixth century. The observance was mentioned at the Second Council of Tours in 567, when monks were enjoined to fast from the beginning of December until Christmas. In 581 or 582, the custom was extended to other areas of France, when the Second Council of Mâcon (in Burgundy) decreed in its ninth canon that fasting according to the Lenten rite should be observed from the eleventh of November until the Nativity (Christmas) on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays.

Following the Council of Mâcon, the observance of Advent, with its three fasts per week, spread throughout France, and thence, slowly, during the ensuing centuries, to other European countries. Even by the thirteenth century, however, Advent was not generally observed in Western Churches, although fasting in the weeks before Christmas was commonly practised. But there were many variations in the way Advent was observed, and also by whom (monks and/or laity). In many instances, the original period of forty days was also reduced to four weeks.

In present times, there remains little uniformity between branches of the Church, and Advent is variously observed by the different Western Churches. Like Lent, Advent was regarded as a time of penitence, though it was not followed with the same rigour as Lent; and with the passage of time, it has developed into a more joyous season, anticipating the birth of the Christ Child. In many countries, various popular practices have been added, especially Advent wreaths and the lighting of an Advent candle on each of the four Sundays before Christmas.

See also: **Lent**.

1. *John* 1:14.
2. Gregory of Tours, *History of the Franks* 10:31.6.

**agnosticism** From the Greek *agnōstos* (unknowable); the doctrine or belief that the answer to the question of whether or not there is a God can never be established with certainty, or that there are no sound reasons for believing or not believing in God; also, the doctrine or belief that knowledge of God is impossible; more generally, the doctrine or belief that human beings cannot be certain of the existence of anything outside their own experience.

The term was coined in 1869, at a meeting of the Metaphysical Society in London, by T.H. Huxley, a British biologist and supporter of Darwinian evolution, who said that it accurately described his own position. It came into his mind, he said, because it seemed to him to be the antithesis of the early Christian gnostics “who professed to know so much about the very things of which I was ignorant”.<sup>1</sup> Huxley’s position was to pursue reason to its very limits, but then frankly and honestly to admit the limits of one’s own knowledge.

It has been pointed out many times that the understanding of God presented by the many and various religions and individuals is so amorphous and varied that the question of theism, agnosticism or atheism can never be adequately addressed. It therefore makes no sense to adopt any position, for the puzzles concerning the nature of God are as deep as the question of whether or not He exists.

See also: **atheism, monotheism, polytheism.**

1. T.H. Huxley, in “agnosticism,” *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 2001.

**‘aha** (Hw) *Lit.* cord, made from twisted coconut fibres, human hair, or sinews from animal intestines; in a religious context, a prayer of such sanctity and power that a whole kingdom could be bound together by it. The efficacy of such a prayer required its repetition to be word perfect, with the speed of delivery, cadence of the voice, and pauses for taking breath to be exactly in accordance with tradition.<sup>1</sup>

See also: **pule** (8.5).

1. See *Nānā I Ke Kumu*, NKK2 pp.124–25.

**‘aha‘aina kala hala** (Hw) *Lit.* feast (‘aha‘aina) to forgive (kala) wrong (hala); a ritualized Hawaiian means of obtaining forgiveness from the gods.

If someone felt that he had seriously offended a god, he could seek forgiveness by throwing a party or feast, invoking his god. At least in pre-Christian days, starving the body as a penance was not something a Hawaiian would do. Since a Hawaiian’s god or ‘aumakua was usually an ancestor and thus part of the ‘ohana (family), a feast involving the ‘ohana would naturally involve the ‘makua (older generation) as well. So a feast or lū‘au was the best way to make everyone happy, obtain forgiveness for any wrongdoing, or seek help from the gods. It was just the logical thing to do. According to *Nānā I Ke Kumu* (‘Look to the Source’), a modern compendium of Hawaiian lore:

Before Christianity was brought to Hawaii, both religious occasions and human milestones were observed with feasting. Food, often scarce, was precious. What was precious was symbolically offered to the gods. Also, eating was pleasant. Man felt closer to his fellow man when the ‘ōpū (belly) was being filled. And though the gods were awesome and powerful, they had all the natural appetites and frailties of man. Therefore, would not man and god feel a warm rapport if they ate together?

It seemed so. For the feasts of old Hawaii – and often ordinary meals as well – carried a feeling of eating with and communing with the gods. This went beyond a ritual offering of the spiritual essence (*aka*) of the food. The god or gods were not offered their portion and then mentally retired to their shelves. A sense of their presence remained throughout the eating. The gap between man and god was indeed narrowed, and the gods were thought more receptive to mortal requests for help or forgiveness.

And so Hawaiians feasted among themselves and with the appropriate gods on such occasions as the birth of the first child, a child’s first birthday, when a young person finished making his first fish net, woven mat or *tapu*, or when he caught his first fish.

*Nānā I Ke Kumu, NKK1 p.1*

**‘aha‘aina waimaka** (Hw) *Lit.* feast (‘aha‘aina) of tears (*waimaka*), a Hawaiian *lū‘au* (feast) to celebrate the end of a period of sorrow.

Immediately after the death of a relative, a ‘aha‘aina *make* (funeral feast) was held to comfort the mourners. A year later, a ‘aha‘aina *waimaka* was held to bring the period of mourning to a close. According to *Nānā I Ke Kumu* (‘Look to the Source’):

One year later, the ‘aha‘aina *waimaka* (feast of tears) was held. This was neither an occasion for mourning nor a ritual meal. It was a party for those who the previous year had shed tears together and were now happy together. Early Hawaiians seem to have sensed that the process of grief is normally completed in a year.

*Nānā I Ke Kumu, NKK1 p.2*

The feast followed a pattern common to all old Hawaiian feasts:

Feasting invoked the goddess *Laka* when *hula* (dance) students were graduated. *Lono*, the god who made things grow, was present when feasting marked a boy’s exit from the female world of his mother and his entry into masculine life.

The dedication of a *heiau* (temple) or an ordinary house, of a canoe or a fish net – all these called for feasting. So did the end of a *kapu* (taboo) season and the harvesting of crops. And if man seriously offended a god, he sought forgiveness, not by subjecting his body to hunger, but by invoking his god in the important 'aha'aina *kala hala* (feast to forgive wrong).

In the pre-Christian days of religious feasts, the Hawaiian and his gods were linked by a human and supernatural tie, the 'aumākua. Once living forebears, the 'aumākua were ancestor gods, divine, but still very much 'ohana (family) members. Thus the Hawaiian feast reinforced both the tie between man and gods and the human bonds of living family. The feast was both a part of religion and a part of the total 'ohana way of life.

Today the gods are rarely present at the feast, and the 'aha'aina as a religious observance has almost disappeared. But, let's underline that 'almost'. As recently as 1969, after a construction worker was accidentally killed on the job, his co-workers held what was surely a ritual 'aha'aina. A black pig, traditionally most favoured by the gods, went into the *imu* (earth oven). But before that some of the blood of the pig was poured on the earth in what may have been a more or less garbled version of early sacrificial offerings.

This is the exception to twentieth century custom. Feasting today is usually a purely human affair – a *lū'au* for family, for employees of big business, or for the tourist. The menu is much like that of the old 'aha'aina, but the symbolism of the food is usually forgotten. Only the tradition-conscious Hawaiian remembers that:

The *pua'a* (pig) had long been the preferred sacrifice to the gods. Taro leaves were a vegetable symbol of the pig; the *āholehole* fish, considered a *pua'a kai* (sea pig), also symbolized and could be a substitute for the real *pua'a*.

*Taro*, substance of *poi*, goes back to the legendary origin of the Hawaiian race; for the first Hawaiian was said to be born as a *taro*.

*Limu kala* (seaweed) symbolically unbound or loosened man from wrong doings and mutual hostilities that marred human and human-with-god relationships.

Chicken (*moa*), always pleasing to the gods, was once used as the most specific of food offerings. A speckled fowl was sacrificed to gain release from insanity (*pupule*).

A Plymouth Rock (where the first Christian missionaries landed in 1820) was the specific offering for a sickly, whining baby.

*Ti* (*Cordyline minalis*) leaves, used as tablecloths even in modern *lū'aus*, invoked protection of the gods and purified man from contamination.

*Nānā I Ke Kumu, NKK1 pp.2–3*

Nonetheless, something of the old spirit lingers on:

The gods may have been deposed and the food symbolism forgotten, but when modern Hawaiians hold an *'aha 'aina* much of the spirit of old Hawaii yet lives. Usually dozens of family members, friends and neighbours get together to provide and prepare food, in the mutual helpfulness known as *kōkua* or *laulima* (many hands). And certainly, in the eating, drinking, singing and talking together, the ties of man to fellow man are strengthened in the mutual regard and love summed up as *aloha*.

In any culture or time, feasting entails more than surface conviviality. Eating together in leisure and relaxation makes the unconscious a little more accessible. (This does not necessarily apply to the business lunch!) External pressures of work, worry and responsibilities lessen or are laid aside for a time. While the physical 'inner man' is being satisfied, the psychological 'inner man' to some extent emerges. People know each other on a somewhat deeper, more honest level, when they 'wine and dine' together. Among Hawaiians, already finely attuned to human relationships, the feast may be a more than ordinarily effective means of getting to know the real person behind the socio-conventional facade.

*Nānā I Ke Kumu, NKK1 p.3*

**āhāra-dāna** (S) *Lit.* food (*āhāra*) giving (*dāna*); a gift of food; a Jain term for the donation of food to a *Digambara* mendicant monk; one of the four categories of *dāna* (*chaturvidha-dāna*), the others being the gift of medicine (*aushadhi-dāna*) and helping the sick, the gift of shelter (*abhaya-dāna*, 'giving fearlessness') to those who are at risk, and the gift of knowledge (*jñāna-dāna*) by giving books and helping schools and colleges. The corresponding *Shvetāmbara* term for alms gathering is *gocharī*.

*Digambara* monks eat and drink water only once a day, unless they are fasting. Food is accepted from a single household, while observing silence. They possess no alms bowl, but collect food only for themselves in the palms of their hands. When ready to accept food, they bend their right arm at the elbow, placing the tips of their fingers on their right shoulder. In order to cause the least harm to other living creatures, they only eat food that has not been specially prepared for them. They may have also made a secret, mental vow only to accept food if certain unspoken conditions have been met

(*vṛitti-parisaṃkhyāna*), such as eating only particular items, eating only a particular number of items, how the food is prepared, and so on.

It is regarded as meritorious to feed mendicant monks, although the associated rituals can vary from place to place. Laypeople indicate that they are willing to feed mendicants by standing outside their houses holding items regarded as auspicious. Inviting the monk to eat, they make assurances that the food, water and the donors themselves are all pure. If the monk stops, the householders circumambulate him in ceremonial reverence before taking him into their house. After having his feet washed while seated on a wooden stool, he stands on a low wooden platform and food is placed in his cupped hands. He inspects the food before eating, and if any impurity is found, he stops eating, and eats nothing more that day.

*Digambara* nuns sit on the platform, but because they do not practise complete nudity, they are not accorded the same status, and in some localities ceremonial reverence is not performed. Advanced *Digambara* laypeople (*kshullakas*, *kshullikās*, and *ailakas*) who have renounced the householder's life and live with mendicants also eat once a day in a layperson's house.<sup>1</sup>

See also: **gocharī**.

1. See "āhāra-dāna," *A to Z of Jainism*, AZJW.

**ahu** (Mo) *Lit.* to heap, to pile up; mound, heap; sacred mound; the central feature of a *tūāhu*, used as an altar; also called an *ahurewa*. See **ahurewa**.

**āhua** (Mo) *Lit.* form, appearance; glory, beauty of spiritual form; token, semblance, likeness; immaterial or intangible representation, witness, or substitute; an aspect of the creative process; a representation of something used in Māori sympathetic magic, in which context it has a meaning similar to *ariā* and *māwe*, both meaning 'semblance' or 'likeness'.

*Te āhua* is the seventh division of the Māori realm of *Rangi* (heaven). It is there that the soul is created, and where the spirits of mortals begin their existence. According to Māori cosmogony, the process by which the heavens and all creation unfold is represented by stages in the growth of *te aka* (the cosmic vine). *Te āhua* (the form) emerges from *te puhia-wānanga* (the intelligence shoot), followed by *te hau-ora* (the breath of life).

*Āhua* can take many forms. A rain-making ritual of the Kāi Tahu used a make-believe representation of the fields for which blessings were sought. Seeds were then thrown over the *āhua* to conjure up rain to make the seeds germinate and grow.<sup>1</sup> The New Zealand ethnographer Elsdon Best (1856–1931) describes many other kinds of *āhua*:

An illustration of a material *āhua* is noted in the conciliatory rite performed before a tree could be felled, so as to placate *Tāne*, the parent of all trees. In this ceremony, the *āhua* of an axe – or, rather, stone adze – was employed. It was merely a leaf tied to a twig. Again, when a gift of food supplies was received from another people, the *taumaha* rite was performed over it, lest the *mana* (power) of the givers should injuriously affect the recipients, or there might perchance be some magic power pertaining to the gift, such as the dreaded *mātakai* (killing spell). Even so, an expert would take the *āhua* of the food (a small portion of it), cook, and eat it during his ceremonial performance. This precautionary act would remove all danger to man.

The *āhua* of a fight or battleground, employed in certain ceremonies, was often a handful of grass or leaves from the place....

In treating a sick person in former times a Māori practitioner sometimes took the *āhua*, or semblance of his disease or complaint. In doing so, he procured a piece of *pūhā* (smooth-leaved sowthistle, *Sonchus oleraceus*), and passed it under the left thigh of the patient, then waved it toward the heavens as he repeated his charms. By this means the *āhua* of the complaint was absorbed by the herb, and then passed out of it into space when the shaman waved his hand....

When a woman wished to separate from her husband she went to a *tohunga* (priest, adept) that he might perform over her the *toko* (divorce ritual). His first act was to conduct her to the *wai tapu* (sacred water) of the village community, that her *aroha* (affection, sympathy) for her husband might be *miria* (effaced). This was the *miri aroha* ceremony. To effect this, the operator took the *āhua* or *ariā* of her affections. He merely made a motion with his hand as though picking something from her body, and this act represented taking the semblance of her affections. A charm was here recited to bring about the desired effacement, “*A ka miria e te tohunga te aroha; arā ka horoia atu te ariā, te āhua o te aroha, ka whakakorea atu* (and the priest effaced the affections; that is, he cleansed or washed away the semblance of such; he abolished it).” After that the divorce ritual was recited....

When a deep-sea voyage was about to be undertaken the Polynesian navigator took the *āhua* (semblance) of his vessel to a *tūāhu* (sacred place) to have the pure rite performed over it.

*Elsdon Best, Spiritual and Mental Concepts of the Maori, SMMB pp.20–21*

Elsewhere, Best explains the need for the rite to be performed at a *tūāhu*:

The *āhua* or personality or semblance of a god is represented by a carved stick (e.g. *whakapakoko*, godstick) or other object (e.g. *toko-tauwaka*), which is kept at the *tūāhu* (altar).

*Elsdon Best, “Spiritual Concepts of the Maori,” SCM2 p.14*



Even Best himself was regarded as an *āhua*, though in this context the term was perhaps used as much in friendly greeting as with literal intent:

Whenever Hākopa, a withered old warlock of Tūhoe, who fought against us at Ōrākau, meets me, his invariable greeting is, “Greetings to you, the *āhua* of the men of old.” His meaning is that I am the semblance, or am endowed with the personality of the old time Māori, on account of my incessant search after the history, customs, *etc.*, of bygone generations. . . .

We have also seen how the *āhua* of land is represented by a material token such as a stone.

Food offered to the gods or to the dead was not, as a rule, thought to be eaten, but the *āhua* thereof was absorbed by the gods or dead.

The *āhua* of a battle was taken by the successful side and over it the priest would repeat invocations in order to render the enemy powerless to avenge their defeat (*hei whakaeo i te hoa-riri*). The representation of this *āhua* would probably be a handful of grass or weeds plucked from the battleground; the battle is emblemized in that bunch of grass. This rite was performed by the priests of Tūhoe after the battle of Te Kauna in 1836 to prevent Ngāti-Awa from avenging their defeat. . . .

The term *āhua* appears to be often used for *ariā*. “*Te āhua o Tamarau he pākura* – the *āhua* of (the god) *Tamarau* is a swamp hen.” In another version the term *ariā* is used.

*Eldson Best, “Spiritual Concepts of the Maori,” SCM2 pp.14–16*

See also: **aka** (▶1), **ariā**, **māwe**.

1. Samuel Timoti Robinson, *Tohunga*, TRAK p.166.

**Ahuna Vairya** (Av), **Ahunvar** (Pv) *Lit.* all-powerful (*vairya*) sovereign (*ahu*); the most sacred Zoroastrian verse, taking its name from its opening words (*yathā ahū vairyo*), and found as an invocation or prologue at the beginning of the *Khordeh Avestā* (which consists mainly of prayers) in the *Yasna* (‘Book of Worship’); used as a prayer even in modern times, often invoked for support in times of difficulty.

From its content and character, the verse could have come from the pen of Zarathushtra, since its meaning is entirely in accord with that of his *Gāthās*. Its actual origin, however, is uncertain. The verse begins:

Just as (*yathā*) a temporal sovereign (*ahu*)  
is all-powerful (*vairya*) on earth,  
so, too, is the prophet (*ratu*),  
by virtue of his storehouse of Truth (*Asha*);

The gifts of Your First Mind (*Vohu Manah*)  
 are given for spiritual effort in devotion to *Mazdā*;  
 The Power (*Xshathra*) of *Ahura* is present indeed  
 with him who becomes a shepherd to the humble.

*Yasna 27:13; cf. DSZ p.17*

The verse says that the prophet or spiritual master has, within himself, the power of a great lord (*ahu*), by virtue of his contact with the unlimited ocean of mystic Truth (*Asha*); that the supreme gifts of the First Mind (*Vohu Manah*), the divine Intelligence or Word – which ultimately leads the soul back to God – are given after great spiritual effort on the part of the disciple (by inference) of a spiritual master; and that the Power (*Xshathra*) of God is present with the master, here described as the “shepherd to the humble” – “the humble” being his initiates, disciples, or devotees.

A commentary on this verse in the *Yasna* begins by portraying the *Ahuna Vairya* as the divine Word itself, the creative power that existed before the creation. The commentary goes on to suggest the use of the *Ahuna Vairya* as a prayer or *mantra*, to be repeated continuously aloud or in the mind. It then once more asserts that the entire creation was produced by the *Ahuna Vairya*. Zarathushtra himself speaks of the divine Word as the *Manthrā* (Word),<sup>1</sup> but he is referring to the divine power, not to a verbal prayer or sacred formula. The commentary is staged as the reply of *Ahura Mazdā* to a question posed by Zarathushtra:

This sacred Word of *Ahuna Vairya* did I, *Ahura Mazdā*, repeat . . .  
 which I pronounced as yours before the sky, before the waters,  
 before the land, before the animals and plants,  
 before fire – *Ahura Mazdā*’s son –  
 before the holy man, before the evil demons, . . .  
 before all corporeal life,  
 even before the good creatures made by *Mazdā*,  
 which contain the seed of Truth (*Asha*).

This word of Mine, *Ahuna Vairya*, O Spitama Zarathushtra, . . .  
 intoned without interruption and omission,  
 is equal to a hundred other holy chants. . . .

Whoever in this corporeal life,  
 shall mentally repeat a portion of the *Ahuna Vairya*,  
 and further, mentally repeating it, mutters it,  
 and further, muttering it, chants it aloud,  
 and further, chanting it aloud, sings its praises –  
 His soul will I, *Ahura Mazdā*,  
 help to cross the Bridge (of *Chinvat*),

into the best world, into the highest world,  
the world of Truth, the realm of eternal light. . .

By speaking it, the holier of my two Spirits  
has produced the entire creation,  
which was, and is, and will be. . .  
And this Word is the most powerful of words  
that have ever been pronounced;  
Its utterance is of such a nature  
that if the entire corporeal world should learn of it,  
and learning, should cling to it,  
they would be redeemed from their mortality.

*Yasna 19:3–6, 8–10; cf. SBE31 pp.260–63*

The writer seems to be confusing the uttered word with the unwritten and unspoken divine Word. Although, as a spiritual practice, the mental repetition of a prayer or *mantra* is commonly used to focus the mind, the two cannot be compared.

See also: **Manthrā** (3.1).

1. *E.g. Zarathushtra, Yasna 31:6, 45:3, 50:6, 51:8.*

**ahurewa** (Mo) *Lit.* elevated (*rewa*) altar (*ahu*); mound, altar, high altar; sacred place, ceremonial place, shrine; the central feature of a *tūāhu* (sacred site), used as an altar dedicated to *Io* the Most Supreme or to various *atua* (lesser deities); the most sacred place (*wāhi tapu*) of a *tūāhu*, before which rituals, prayers, incantations (*karakia*), meditation, and ceremonies are performed; also called an *ahu*; also, a condition of great holiness, as when a person places his life unreservedly in the power of the gods – considering human powers to be no longer of any avail.

The highest and most sacred degree of attainment among the *tohunga* is known as the *tohunga ahurewa* (*tohunga* of the high altar) or *tohunga tūāhu* (*tohunga* of the sacred place). It refers to a *tohunga* or priest who teaches and performs ceremonies, rites and rituals of the highest significance pertaining to *Io*, the supreme Being.

A *tūāhu* and its associated *ahurewa* could be located anywhere, often in a secret, secluded place in the forest or among bracken, marked with stones or wooden pegs. The Māori considered stone to be the most enduring of materials, and these sacred altars are constructed of a simple but strong pile of stones, or formed from a naturally occurring mound of stones:

Māori consider the *tūāhu* a fearful place with *tapu* enough to kill a person should they trespass upon the site, even accidentally. At the *tūāhu* site there is also the *ahu* or altar. The *ahu* is also called the *ahurewa*. Its structure is simple yet strong, made from a pile of stones placed together. The *tūāhu* has stones for the altar and around the site, because to the Māori mind stone is the strongest thing. While the earth may wash away and turn to dust, these stones endure and remain with time, like the knowledge of the *tohunga*.

*Samuel Timoti Robinson, Tohunga, TRAK p.94*

See also: **tohunga ahurewa** (7.1), **tūāhu**.

**akhand pāṭh** (Pu) *Lit.* ceaseless (*akhand*) recitation (*pāṭh*) of scriptures; in the Sikh tradition, continuous recitation of the *Ādi Granth*, reading it from start to finish.

The *Ādi Granth*, assembled by Guru Arjun (the fifth Sikh *guru*), contains the writings of the first five *gurus*, together with those of many other Indian *sants* (saints), such as Kabīr, Nāmdev, and Ravidās. The practice of *akhand pāṭh* was started some time after the last of the ten Sikh *gurus* by a group known as the *Buddhā Dal* or the *Nihang* Sikhs. Nowadays, it is a common Sikh practice, and the sound of the recitation can often be heard echoing from the many *gurdwāras* of the Punjab. Four or five *pāṭhīs* (reciters) take it in turn, and the entire *Ādi Granth* is completed in around forty-eight hours.

Many mystics have advised that the Name of the Lord should be repeated continuously; or they have recommended listening to the unending Music. In the absence of a living mystic to guide their understanding, and not realizing that the mystics are referring to an inner, mystical experience, later devotees of religion have misinterpreted and externalized the advice, and taken it to mean continuous recitation of scriptures.

The twentieth-century mystic Maharaj Charan Singh used to say that people pay priests to have *pāṭh* performed in their houses. But while this is going on, they neither listen to it, nor do they follow the teachings being recited:

The reading of scriptures (*pāṭh*) would be of help if we studied with determination and delved deep into their mystic meaning. But here also we seem to think that getting the scriptures read by a hired priest is all that is needed. The priest keeps reading in the house, while we go to the office or amuse ourselves. It is, indeed, trying for us to attend even the concluding ceremonies. Such a course can never subdue the mind.

*Maharaj Charan Singh, Spiritual Discourses, SD1 p.74*

Since there is a power of attraction even in outer melody, some concentration of the mind and refinement of a person's feeling may be experienced by reciting or listening to religious music. With this concentration, the mind can become temporarily detached from other worldly affairs, and a certain amount of bliss may even be experienced. Outer music certainly has a powerful effect on the mind, but – being of the bodily senses – it cannot of itself take an individual into higher worlds:

Listening to external music (*nādbād*),  
 he becomes trapped like a deer.  
 He becomes happy,  
 but does not know the secret of the inner Sound.

*Bhāī Gurdās, Kabī Savaīye 412*

Transcend the external music (*nādbād*)  
 and merge with the Unstruck (*Anāhad*) (music).

*Bhāī Gurdās, Kabī Savaīye 11*

See also: **pāṭh**.

**alchemy (Daoism)**. See **liànjīnshù**.

**alfī** (Pu) *Lit.* a cloak; an unsewn shirt; a kind of shirt worn by *faqīrs* as a symbol of piety and spirituality; also used for dressing a dead body. An *alfī* consists of a long piece of cloth with a longitudinal cut in the middle, through which the head is passed. It has no sleeves and is not sewn by a tailor.

Mystics have pointed out that dressing in a particular kind of clothing does not make a person spiritual:

For as long as you do not kill your self (*khudī*),  
 the cloak of piety (*alfī*) you wear will never suit you.  
 The name '*faqīr*' will befit you, O Bāhū,  
 only when you die while living.

*Sulṭān Bāhū, Bait 66, SBU p.380; cf. SBE pp.274–75*

See also: **khirqah**, **muraqqa'**.

**Allāh akbar, Allāhu akbar** (A/P) *Lit.* God (*Allāh*) is most great (*akbar*); a commonly used Muslim invocation, even one repetition of which is called a *takbīr*. See **takbīr**.

**altar ceremony** A generic name for a number of Native American ceremonies that involve the use of an altar. The altar can be made with wood or stones, symbolically ornamented, or may be a simple circle drawn on the ground showing the four directions, with small coloured cloths representing each of the directions. It may be set up outdoors or inside a religious room or building. The altar itself usually represents the earth, and holds prayer offerings, prayersticks, and whatever ritual items the shaman may use in the ceremony. It may be part of a wider setting that includes such things as sand paintings of various symbolic images. Among the many tribal nations, different rituals are performed, each requiring its own altar design and ritual items.

The American painter and writer Thomas Mails (1920–2001), who developed a long-term association with Native North American traditions, describes the ceremony as it is conducted by the Pueblo Indians, such as the Hopi and the Zuni:

The altar is set up at the north end of the *kiva* (religious building), and it has two parts. The first is a *reredos* (back screen), and the second consists of a group of ritual objects set on the floor in front of the screen. Each ritual has its own altar, design, and objects. The usual *reredos* is made up of a row of vertical wooden slats, together with clay tiles or flat stones that are all affixed to an upright wood frame. On these are painted symbolic or realistic representations of natural and supernatural things related to the ceremony in progress. Typical are corn, rain clouds, lightning, heavenly bodies, sacred animals, and cult heroes. The base of the altar *reredos* rests directly on the *kiva* floor. In front of it are placed *tiponis* and the effigies of sky and earth gods and cult patrons. A medicine bowl sits on a low pile of clean sand. Six radiating lines of sacred cornmeal are drawn out from the bowl to represent the six cardinal directions – north, east, south, west, up, and down. On top of each line is placed an ear of corn whose colour corresponds to the direction with which it is associated. The north ear is yellow, the west is blue or green, the south is red, the east is white, above is black, and below is speckled. Appropriate bird feathers, *aspergilli* (fungi), crystals, pebbles, and other objects are also placed along the lines.

Water in which the medicine ingredients are mixed is brought from a special spring in a nettled gourd. As the water is being poured into the medicine bowl, various objects taken from the radiating lines of sacred meal are dropped into it at intervals, and specified songs are sung. Sometimes a crystal is used to reflect light into the bowl. This is interpreted as a prayer for fertility, since there are several myths that describe how women became impregnated when a sun ray fell on their vulvae. Sometimes smoke is blown into the bowl as a direct appeal to

the home of the clouds. Nearly always a member kneels and blows an eagle or turkey wing bone whistle into the bowl to summon the deities.

*Thomas Mails, Secret Native American Pathways, SNPM pp.88–89*

**amen** (He), **amēn** (Gk), **āmīn** (A/P) *Lit.* so be it; it is true; verily, truly; an expression of assent used at the conclusion of prayers in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam; generally anglicized as ‘Amen’.

In the Hebrew Bible, for instance:

And all the people shall answer and say, “*Amen*”.

*Deuteronomy 27:15, KJV*

Blessed be the Lord for evermore. *Amen* and *Amen*.

*Psalms 89:52, KJV*

In Christianity, “Amen” is the usual conclusion to a prayer. In the Christian gospels, it is the word commonly translated as “verily” or “truly”:

Verily, verily (*amēn, amēn*) I say unto you,  
except a man be born again,  
he cannot see the kingdom of God.

*John 3:3; cf. KJV*

Concerning the invocation “Amen” in Christian prayer and the capacity of the soul to affirm the indwelling power of the Divine, the English Puritan theologian Richard Sibbes (1577–1635) writes:

‘Amen’ is a short word, but marvellously pregnant, full of sense, full of spirit. It is a word that seals all the truths of God and seals every particular promise of God; and it is never likely to arise in the soul, unless there be first an almighty power from heaven (*i.e.* the Spirit) to seize on the powers of the soul, to subdue them, and make it say “Amen.” There is such an inward resistance of the heart and an innate rebellion against the blessed truth of God, that unless God, by His strong arm, bring the heart down, it never will nor can say “Amen.”

*Richard Sibbes, The Bride’s Longing, WRS6 p.540*

In Islam, “*āmīn*” is the response to a prayer uttered by others, and is also spoken at the end of the opening chapter of the *Qur’ān*, known as the *fātiḥah*. It appears in expressions such as “*Āmīn yā Mu‘īn* (So let it be, O Helper)” and, “*Āmīn yā Rabb al-‘ālamīn* (Amen, O Lord of the worlds).”

In Hebrew, *amen* has received a number of interpretations, not necessarily based on the etymology of the word. *Amen* itself is composed of three letters – *aleph*, *mem*, and *nun* – and is interpreted as an acronym of the sentence *El melekh ne'eman* (God is a faithful king). Thus when *amen* is said at the end of a prayer, it is an assertion that God wills it so, that He is faithful and will keep His word. It is a statement of confidence and faith. The rabbi in the synagogue often recites a prayer from the liturgy to which the congregation responds: “*El melekh ne'eman*.”

The early thirteenth-century kabbalist Rabbi 'Azriel of Gerona wrote a complex commentary on a talmudic legend concerning the use of *amen*, and its relationship to *oman* (artisan, creator), *emunah* (faith), and *emet* (truth). Using an involved wordplay based on phonetic similarities between the words rather than their actual etymology, he draws on the kabbalistic symbolism of the *sefirot* to explain his ideas. He says that the “Source of Blessing” or the “Fountain of Blessing” is, in fact, the source of the *sefirah* of *Hokhmah* (Wisdom), which is the divine creative power. Through the invocation of *amen*, the devotee increases the flow of the divine energy of the various *sefirot* into the creation from the “Fountain of Blessing”, which is Wisdom. He then says that *Emet* (Truth), as a symbol of the lower *sefirah* of *Tiferet* (Splendour), flows from *Hokhmah* (Wisdom), which here is called *Emunah* (Faith). His logic is complex and difficult to follow, but his essential meaning is that correct reading and speaking of *amen* draws down blessings from on high through the *sefirot*:

We should extract and extend forth the Fountain of Blessing to the attribute befitting it. Thus one should not forsake reading it (the word *amen*); nor should one skim over any of its letters, nor hurry in reading them; neither should we respond with *amen* more than required. Anyone who avoids all these (errors) and performs properly is analogous to one who opens the Source of Blessing within Him, may He be blessed.

One who makes the Fountain (of Blessing) flow is similar to a hero who emboldens his troops which are struggling with his adversary. When they overcome (his adversary), the battle thereafter is known by the hero's name. But if this is not the case, then all is in vain. This, then, is the reason that Blessing is known by the name of he who responds with *amen* in faith (*be-emunah*). Just as the victorious warriors quickly take plunder and then gather the booty together so that the king may keep for himself the choicest parts, so too do those who bless hasten to be blessed from the expanding Blessing. Thereupon, he who answers *amen* is blessed from the very origin of the Source of Blessing. By that attribute which he blesses, he too is blessed. Finally,



he who responds with *amen* is similar to one who proclaims, “Let the power of God be increased.”<sup>1</sup>

Since Faith (*Emunah*) stems from *Ayn-Sof* (the Infinite), one says *amen*, and in so doing he is like one who says “in Faith (*be-Emunah*), the Trainer (*ha-Omen*) increases the Confidence (*Imun*) from the Artisan (*Oman*), by means of *amen*”.

This means: *amen* increases Truth (*Emet*) out of Faith (*Emunah*). According to Rabbi Ḥiyya, *amen* causes Truth (*Emet*) to grow forth from its origin so that it expresses God’s Unity and Kingdom. Thus, *amen* draws the power from Faith (*Emunah*) to increase the power of Truth (*Emet*), which nourishes everything. Furthermore, he who answers *amen* in faith increases the Source of Blessing. He not only is one who increases the blessing from Blessing, but from the Source itself.

The meaning of *amen* is to extol Truth (*Emet*), and therefore it is said, “From whence is it known that we should respond to one who makes a benediction with *amen*? Because it is written, ‘Extol God with me.’”<sup>2</sup> This exultation is immeasurable, as in “His greatness is immeasurable.”<sup>3</sup> ...

He who answers *amen* is one who draws forth the flow of Wisdom (*Hokhmah*) sanctified through the holiness of the power of intelligence. And he does it more explicitly than the one who says the blessing by the power of the word *amen*, which is an allusion to Wisdom from which the energy of each and every power grows. Thus it states (of *Hokhmah*): “I was by Him as *amon* (artisan).”<sup>4</sup>

One should answer *amen* after he who blesses, for it is written, “Ascribe greatness to our God”<sup>5</sup> and “So that he who blesses himself on the earth shall bless himself by the God of *amen*.”<sup>6</sup>

*Rabbi ‘Azriel of Gerona, in PAAT pp.23–26, in EKD pp.97–99*

1. *Numbers* 14:17.
2. *Psalms* 34:3.
3. *Psalms* 145:3.
4. *Proverbs* 8:30.
5. *Deuteronomy* 32:3.
6. *Isaiah* 65:16.

**anashan(a)** (S/H) *Lit.* not eating (*an-ashana*); fasting; renunciation of food for a shorter or longer period. *Anashana* is one of the six external austerities (*bāhya-tapas*) practised to various degrees by both Jain laity and mendicants, although it is more common among laywomen than laymen. *Anashana* is

sometimes understood as interior fasting (*bhāva-anashana*), which implies control of desires for a longer or shorter period. The vow to fast in order to gain control over desires and the senses, so that meditation and study of the scriptures are not disturbed, is known as *anashana-vrata* (vow of fasting). The term more commonly used for fasting in a Jain context is *upavāsa*.

*Anashana* covers either a specified period from one up to a maximum of one hundred and eighty days, or until death. The vow to fast until death when the end of life draws near, known as *sallekhanā*, is peculiar to the Jain tradition.

See also: **upavāsa**.

**ancestor worship** Worship of the spirits of the departed is or has been prevalent in Japanese, Chinese, Indian and other cultures, especially indigenous and preliterate societies. It is an aspect of Buddhist, Hindu and Shinto religions, its prevalence being far more widespread before the rise of education and the global society.

Ancestor worship presupposes a belief in an afterlife and is founded on the notion that the spirits of the dead maintain a continuing relationship with the living, influencing their lives in various ways. Attitudes towards the spirits of dead ancestors include love and respect, veneration, worship, and fear of the consequences if they are not propitiated. Sometimes, concerned at the possible suffering of the departed, survivors make offerings in the belief that it will ameliorate the condition of their ancestors. Among Hindu and Buddhist traditions, this, however, is contrary to an understanding of the law of *karma* and reincarnation, since ancestors may have already been reborn, perhaps many times, and the worshipper could even be the reincarnated ancestor.

In some societies, only male ancestors are venerated. Ancestors thus esteemed may have died only recently, while others may have left this world long ago, and may even be mythical. The number of ancestors revered also varies from many to a single hero of long ago.

See also: **Buddhist festivals**, **pitṛiloka** (4.1), **pitṛipūjā**, **pitṛiyāna** (4.1).

**ango** (J), **ānjū** (C) *Lit.* peaceful (*ān*) dwelling (*jū*); dwelling in peace; a *Chán* and *Zen* Buddhist term for the three-month summer retreat during the rainy season or for a period of intense meditation at this time; used in the Japanese *Sōtō Zen* school to calculate the *dharma* age of a monk or nun, this being the number of rainy-season retreats in which he or she has participated; also called *gegyō* (summer dwelling), *zarō* (J. sitting), *zage* (J. summer sitting); equivalent to the *Theravāda* *varsha* (S) or *vassa* (Pa). See **varsha**.

**añjali-mudrā** (S), **thal mo sbyar ba** (T), **hé zhǎng** (C), **gasshō** (J) *Lit.* palms (*thal mo, zhǎng*) together (*sbyar ba, hé*); palms together (*añjali, gasshō*) in a gesture (*mudrā*) of respect and humility; a hand gesture used by Buddhists, by the people of India and Nepal, and throughout the Jain, Hindu and Sikh diaspora as a greeting, and to express gratitude, supplication, and respect for others; also used as a ritual, reverential gesture during worship; also called *namaste* (bowing to you, I bow to the Divine in you).

The *añjali-mudrā* can take different forms, but most commonly the palms are placed together, either touching or slightly hollowed, elbows a little away from the body, fingers straight and the palms raised in front of the face at a distance of approximately a hand's width from the nose, the fingertips level with the tip of the nose. In Japan, *gasshō* is usually accompanied by a traditional bow with the back straight and the body bent at the waist.

Many interpretations have been given to this gesture of humility, ranging from simple salutation to deeper symbolism. It can imply the oneness of all, the saluted with the one saluting. It can acknowledge with reverence the interconnectedness of all things in the universe – air, water, sun, stars, and all of nature – and how such things support one's individual existence.

See also: **mudrā**.

**apocalypse** (Gk. *apokalypsis*) A disaster or cataclysmic event, especially one in which the world is violently destroyed by God; also, a prophecy or revelation; any of a number of Jewish and Christian writings that depict the triumph of good over evil. See **Day of Judgment**.

**ārāadhan(a)** (S/H/Pu) *Lit.* worship, adoration, homage, propitiation; worship of God or of a deity as in the expression *Īshvara ārādhana* (worship of God). Mystically, worship of the Divine entails continual awareness of His presence as the Essence of all things:

You are my soul! ...

Your attendants are my life energy (*prāṇa*),  
my body Your dwelling! ...

My ramblings on foot are reverential circumambulations around You,  
All my words are hymns of praise to You,  
whatever I do is an act of worship (*ārāadhan*), O creator of bliss!

*Shankara, Shiva-mānasa pūjā; cf. in SSI6 pp.178–79*

This kind of worship is always at the inner “temple”:

When it is time for worship (*ārādhana*) at the temple  
 in the silent night –  
 O King, order me to sing.  
 When the golden lute sounds in the morning air,  
 order me to be present and honour me.

*Rabindranath Tagore, Āmi hetai thāki, in SSI2 pp.294–95*

The Jain teacher Āchārya Kundakunda (traditionally dated to C2nd–3rd CE) equates *ārādhana* with spiritual contemplation:

Those who are free from all (worldly) occupations,  
 who always remain deeply absorbed  
 in four kinds of contemplation (*ārādhana*),  
 and are possessionless and delusionless,  
 are said to be saints (*sādhus*).

*Kundakunda, Niyamasāra 4:75; cf. NAKU p.38*

The “four kinds of contemplation” are understood to be *samyag-darshana* (right understanding), *samyak-jñāna* (right knowledge), *samyak-chāritra* (right conduct), and *tapas* (austerities, penance). They refer to the first four of the *pañchāchāra* or five categories of conduct regarded as essential aspects in the contemplative life of a Jain *āchārya*. Conduct, here, includes the thought process or inner being from which outer conduct proceeds.

In the *Ādi Granth*, Guru Arjun uses the term in a verb form, where the meaning is that of inner worship or meditation:

In the company of the devotees (*sādh sang*),  
 I meditate (*ārādhnā*) on the Lord, whose treasure is infinite.  
 The Lord makes no delay in blessing me  
 with righteousness, wealth, success, and salvation.  
 The devotees contemplate (*arādhheh*) the Lord Master  
 with single-minded affection.  
 They garner the wealth of the Lord’s Name,  
 of which there is no count.

*Guru Arjun, Ādi Granth 816, AGC*

See also: **haṭha yoga** (8.5).

**ārātrika** (S), **ārat**, **ārati** (H), **ārtī** (H/Pu) A lighted oil, ghee or camphor lamp or lamps that are moved on a salver in a clockwise, circular manner (often described as ‘waving’) before an image of a deity or any object of veneration,

the circle often reaching high above the head and low to the ground; also, commonly, the actual ceremony as well as the devotional songs sung at such times; in temple worship, usually part of a *pūjā* (ceremony of worship) with offerings of water, flowers, incense, music and devotional songs, in which lamps on a salver are moved in a circular manner before the image of the deity, with flower petals being showered or placed upon the image; a prevalent ceremony in Jain, Hindu, and Sikh traditions. The etymology of the word is uncertain, although various possibilities have been put forward.

In the Sikh tradition, *ārātī* is performed before a copy of the Sikh holy book, the *Guru Granth Sāhib*. Although Buddhist *pūjā* includes the offering of lighted lamps, there seems to be no traditional use of *ārātī* or the waving of these lamps before the image of a *buddha*, a *bodhisattva*, or any other object of Buddhist veneration.

*Āratī* may also be performed before the image or statue of a holy man, or it may be performed for the supposed benefit of an individual or group of people who are still living. Honoured guests may also be welcomed with the ceremony. Traditionally, the ceremony is also performed for individuals, especially rulers, the rich and those in the public eye, to ward off the effect of jealous and negative looks. This ceremony is performed at home when such a person is appearing in public, and in the case of those who are constantly in public, it may be performed several times a day. In the past, it was also performed for the welfare of animals, such as horses and elephants.

It is probable that the ritual was first introduced into South India. Some maintain that it has its origins in the Vedic fire sacrifice (*homa*). Others suggest that the ceremony had its beginnings with the practice of placing an idol or image (*mūrti*) deep inside a cave. In order to see the idol, devotees would wave lighted lamps from the idol's head to toe, in order to see it. This gradually developed into the more elaborate *ārātī* ceremony that is practised today.

There are many small variations in the details of ceremony. In Hindu temples, *ārātī* is generally performed both morning and evening, sometimes more frequently, and certainly once a day. In large temples, it may be performed five times a day. In domestic shrines of the devout, *ārātī* is practised morning and evening. *Āratī* is also a part of most other ceremonies, especially as the conclusion of a *pūjā* ceremony or session of *bhajans* (devotional songs). The joyful singing of prayers or *bhajans* is often accompanied by the playing of drums, bells, conches, and musical instruments. In temples, the ceremony is generally performed by a monk (*sādhu*) or attendant (*pujārī*) who rings a small hand bell while waving the lamps and singing *bhajans*.

When the salver with its lamps is waved before the idol, its flames are believed to become imbued with the power of the deity. The salver is then circulated among the congregation, who each in turn cup their hands over

the flames and then raise them to their forehead. In this way, the power and blessing of the deity is believed to pass from the deity to the flames, and thence to the devotee. This is often followed by offerings of money, in gratitude for the blessing.

The details of the ceremony vary from place to place. The salver is usually made of silver, copper, or bronze; the body of the lamp is made of kneaded rice flour, mud or metal and is filled with oil or ghee. One or more but always an odd number of cotton wicks are soaked in the oil or ghee and set alight. Alternatively, the lamps are made of camphor obtained from the camphor tree (*Cinnamomum camphora*) or of resin from some coniferous and other trees that contain sufficient oils to burn when lit. Sometimes a mixture of oil and camphor lamps is used. The salver may also contain water, flowers, incense, and uncooked rice grains (*akshata*). Sometimes, the lamp is simply held in the hand of a temple priest. The ceremony can also be performed at home before the image or idol of the deity, or before an individual. Sometimes, lighted lamps are not used; instead, the salver is filled with water, coloured red with saffron and other substances.

When performed with humility, devotion and a focused mind, the ceremony is intended to help the devotees forget their thoughts of the world and become immersed in the power and presence of the Divine, through the mediation of their chosen deity. This helps to carry the feeling of the divine presence into worldly activities, and the idol and the ceremony may in themselves act as no more than a reminder to keep the divine presence in mind.

The symbolism of the ceremony is variously interpreted. Lighted lamps are commonly understood to signify the quest for enlightenment, and the overcoming of spiritual darkness by divine light. The circular motion represents the continuous cycling of creation. Similarly, just as the lamps eventually burn themselves out, so too does the devotee pray that the ego will eventually be reduced to nothing. Again, just as the lamps are lit as an offering to the deity, so do the devotees desire to offer themselves in the service of the Divine. Sometimes, *āratī* includes the waving of a white cloth and a fan or fly whisk (*chamara*). Together with the other items offered to the deity, these are said to symbolize the five ‘elements’ or *tattvas* of which all material creation is comprised, viz. space (*ākāsha*, the white cloth), air (the fan), fire (the flames), water, and earth (the incense and flowers). In this way, the entire creation is offered to the deity during the *āratī* ceremony. Sometimes, the water is contained in a conch shell, and it is the hollow inside the shell that is said to represent *ākāsha*.

In the Jain tradition, *āratī* is performed before the image of a *Tīrthankara*, using a five-wicked, oil or ghee lamp or a single-wicked camphor lamp. It is normally performed at the end of a sequence of *pūjā* rites, and is believed to annul any negative *karma* that may have been unintentionally accrued during

the performance of the *pūjā* by harming life forms or in other ways. *Āratī* is also performed as a special early evening ceremony. The rite is practised in temples of the *Mūrtipūjaka* (image-worshipping) school of the *Shvetāmbara* tradition, except by the *Achala Gachchha*. In the *Digambara* tradition, *āratī* is practised in South Indian temples and in some *Digambara Bīsapanthī* temples in the north.<sup>1</sup> During the *Pārshvanātha-Jayantī* festival, which celebrates the birth of Pārshvanātha (the twenty-third *Tīrthankara* in the present cycle of time), an *āratī* ceremony using a 108-wicked lamp is sometimes performed, 108 being an auspicious number in Indian lore. Followers of the *Tāraṇ Svāmī Panth* worship and perform *āratī* before the fourteen books of their founder and reformer, Tāraṇ Svāmī (1448–1515), along with the books of Āchārya Kundakunda (traditionally dated to C2nd–3rd CE) and other teachers of the *Digambara* tradition.

Lights and sounds – candles, bells, gongs, music, *etc.* – are used in almost all forms of external religious worship, whether in Hindu, Buddhist or other temples, Christian churches, Muslim mosques, Sikh *gurdwāras*, and so on. A number of mystics, especially Indian *sants*, have pointed out that these outward ceremonies are an externalization of the inner experience of divine light and music. The sound of the first spiritual region, *sahasra-dal kamal* (thousand-petalled lotus), for example, has been likened to that of a deep and resounding bell sound, while its light is like that of one central flame surrounded by a thousand lesser flames.

Religious practices of this nature may have arisen from an externalization or literalization of mystical teachings. Mystics themselves say that the true *āratī* or worship is a mystic experience within, with no external show or exhibition of any kind. When a soul begins to hear the divine sound and to see the divine light within, it is flooded with inner bliss and the love of God, and filled with a sense of true worship. Knowing God to be present in every part of creation, within and without, Guru Nānak speaks of this true and natural worship; and orchestrating it all is the unstruck music of the divine Word:

In the bowl (*thāl*, salver) of the sky (*gagan*),  
 the sun and moon are the lamps (*dīpak*),  
 the stars in the constellations are the pearls (*motī*).  
 The fragrance of sandalwood is the incense,  
 the wind is the fan,  
 and all the vegetation is flowers,  
 in offering to You, O luminous Lord.  
 What a beautiful *ārtī* this is!  
 O Destroyer of Fear, this is Your *ārtī*.  
 The *anāhata Shabd* (unstruck Sound)  
 is the sounding of the *bheri* (a kind of drum).

Thousands are Your eyes,  
 and yet You have no eyes.  
 Thousands are Your forms,  
 and yet You have not even one form.  
 Thousands are Your lotus feet,  
 and yet You have no feet.  
 Without a nose, thousands are Your noses:  
 I am enchanted with Your play!

*Guru Nānak, Ādi Granth 663, AGK*

Referring to the various ceremonial actions associated with *āratī*, other Indian mystics have likewise indicated that the real worship is within. Mīrābāī and others have also given a symbolic meaning to the particular aspects of *āratī*. Here, the “Name (*Nām*)” is the divine Name or Word:

Dear Lord, day and night,  
 I wish to practise worship (*ārat*) of your Name (*Nām*).  
 My body can be the flame;  
 My mind can be the wick;  
 My heart can be turned into oil  
 to light Your lamp, day and night.

*Mīrābāī, Shabdāvalī, Mishrit ang, Shabd 11:1–2, MBS p.49*

O my mind, practise *ārtī*: ...  
 let the rhythm be that of the pure, unstruck Melody;  
 Let the reading of the *Vedas* be without tongue; ...  
 Let the light of (true) knowledge burn without wick.

*Yārī Sāhib, Ratnāvalī, Shabd 9:1, 3, 6, YSB p.3*

Tulsī Sāhib provides an extensive symbolic interpretation of the various elements of the ceremony. Here, the sun, moon and stars signify the appearance of the inner light. Garlands, sandalwood and betel leaves refer to other offerings that may be placed on the salver. The *alal* is a mythical bird that lives and lays its eggs in the sky; before the egg touches the ground, the baby bird hatches and flies up into the sky to unite with its parents. The *mṛidang* is a kind of drum, and the *manjīr* and *jhāñjh* are varieties of cymbals; both are used to signify the inner Melody of the creative power:

Perform *ārtī* in the presence of the *satguru*,  
 and see the light that shines within.  
 Kindle the fire of the five elements,  
 and see the glowing radiance of the lamp within.



Making a salver of the inner sky, place upon it the sun and moon  
as the flowers and fruits (of your worship).  
Place upon it a pot of camphor filled with the true Essence.

The ceremonial pearls and sacred rice  
symbolize the stars of the inner skies.  
String a garland of flowers,  
and treasure it in your heart with love.  
The betel leaves, sweets, sandalwood, incense and lamp  
are all within.

Like a fish in water, absorb the mind  
in the sweetest melodies (*dhun*) of the drum (*mṛidang*)  
emanating from the cymbals (*jhāñjh manjīr*).  
Fragrance spreads throughout the inner sky:  
like a bee intoxicated by the lotus, imbibe this fragrance  
and revel in the Melody (*Dhun*).  
Behold the divine light that blazes within your body,  
gazing upon which all vices are eradicated.  
A stream of nectar flows from the unfathomable realm –  
at the door of Truth, let your soul be permeated by its sweetness.  
Imbibing it, the soul is inebriated:  
as it ascends further, the bliss intensifies  
and the soul revels in the sweetness of the nectar.

The dazzling brilliance of countless suns illuminates that realm;  
Keeping your attention absorbed within,  
make manifest that which is unmanifest.  
Moment by moment, keep your consciousness  
focused on the unfathomable abode;  
With the grace of the *guru*,  
drink the sweet nectar of the Inaccessible.  
Brilliant and intense is the refulgence of the *satguru*'s realm.  
Says Tulsī, invert your attention and leave the body behind:  
soar like the *alal*-bird to the inner skies.

*Tulsī Sāhib, Shabdāvalī 2, Ārtī, TSH2 p.118*

Ravidās and other *sants* have written in a similar vein. Ravidās says that the divine Name, the creative power, is the focus of his internal worship. In this poem, the “eighteen bundles of leaves” refers to the ancient practice of offering leaves of many varieties to an idol. The total quantity collected from the many kinds of vegetation is said to be “eighteen bundles”, each weighing about five maunds (ten pounds):<sup>2</sup>

Your Name (*Nām*) is my *ārtī* and ablutions, O Lord:  
 without God's Name all religious paraphernalia are false.  
 Your Name is my prayer mat,  
 Your Name my saffron grater,  
 and your Name the saffron that I sprinkle upon You.  
 Your Name is the water, your Name the sandalwood,  
 and the repetition of the Name is the rubbing thereof –  
 This is the sandalwood paste that I make to anoint You.

Your Name is the lamp, Your Name the wick,  
 your Name is the oil that I pour therein.  
 With Your Name I have kindled the light:  
 with its illumination my entire home is bright.  
 Your Name is the string, Your Name the garland of flowers;  
 Defiled is the offering of all the eighteen bundles of leaves –  
 why should I offer You what You Yourself have created?  
 Your Name is the whisk (*chanvar*) that I wave over You.  
 The whole world is engrossed in the eighteen *Purāṇas*  
 and the sixty-eight places of pilgrimage;  
 It rotates within the four forms of life.  
 Your Name is the *ārtī*, says Ravidās,  
 And Your true Name itself is offered to You  
 as the ceremonial food, O my Lord.

*Ravidās, Vāṇī 114, SGRV pp.115–16; cf. GRPS pp.122–23*

This, he says, is the true *ārtī* performed by the saints:

The saint performs *ārtī* of the Lord supreme.  
 He takes his seat within his own heart,  
 and repeats the Lord's Name without tongue.  
 He burns incense within the temple of his mind,  
 and offers the garland of love to the beloved Divine.  
 The lamps are then kindled all around,  
 and the inner light shines in abundance.  
 Then the light merges into the Light,  
 and union of the two lights is attained,  
 for their essence is the same.  
 There plays the divine Music  
 wherein are absorbed the body, mind, and self.

*Ravidās, Vāṇī 113, SGRV p.115; cf. GRPS p.90*

Such is *ārtī*, he writes, which is performed in the divine realms within:

Perform *ārtī* in the inner sky (*gagan maṇḍal*);  
Merge the self in the Sound Current. . . .  
Let the unceasing flow of love be the ghee  
that soaks and adorns the wick,

And let the light burn day and night in *trikuṭī*. . . .  
Resplendent within is the thousand-petalled lotus,  
where the unstruck divine Symphony plays on eternally.  
This is how to perform the true *ārtī* of the supreme Being,  
and how the service of the Imperceptible  
and Undifferentiated is observed.  
Only a *guru* can explain this *ārtī*, says Ravidās,  
only an *ārtī* like this can ferry you across at the end.

*Ravidās, Vāṇī 176, SGRV pp.138–39; cf. GRPS p.91*

Addressing his *guru*, he says that by means of inner worship of the Name, the radiant and spiritual form of his *guru* has appeared before him:

In performing your *ārtī*, my mind is thrilled with delight,  
and your form appears within me, intensely bright. . . .  
Your *ārtī* is performed with the wick of the Name (*Nām*),  
soaked in the ever-flowing ghee of love –  
And this lamp alone illumines the divine regions above.

*Ravidās, Vāṇī 177, SGRV p.139; cf. GRPS p.92*

Kabīr recommends performance of such an *ārtī* that lifts the soul above the three worlds;

Perform that worship (*ārtī*) which has the power  
to redeem all the three worlds (*tribhuvan*).  
Take your self, and place it as an offering  
before the One who is the storehouse,  
the source, and the essence of Light.  
With the five leaves of *simran* (remembrance),  
with the five flowers of *Shabd*,  
worship Him who has not a whit of *māyā*,  
who is without an equal,  
who is One, without a second.

*Kabīr, Granthāvalī, Padāvalī 403, KG p.168; cf. KWGN p.449*

Though mystics may point out that external observances in themselves do not confer spirituality, religious ceremony can create an atmosphere conducive to internal feelings of love, devotion, and worship. Mystics themselves may

enjoy such ceremonies, without becoming an unthinking slave to them. In a journal concerning his time with Shri Ramakrishna, Mahendra Nath Gupta ('M.') speaks of the joy experienced by witnessing the *ārati* and listening to the devotional music of the many Hindu temples dedicated to *Kālī*, *Vishṇu* and *Shiva* that surrounded Ramakrishna's home. Of course, association with the often ecstatic Ramakrishna would in itself have opened Gupta's heart to the experience of joy and bliss. In this description, he is relating the experience of his first meeting with Ramakrishna. When he arrives at Ramakrishna's room:

He sees a roomful of people, seated motionless and drinking the nectar of his words. Ṭhākur (Ramakrishna) is seated on the bedstead, his face towards the east. He is talking of *Hari* with a smiling face. The *bhaktas* (devotees) are seated on the floor.

M. looks in and stands speechless. . . . Says Ṭhākur, "When, just at the name of *Hari* or *Rāma*, your hair stands on end and tears flow from your eyes, know it for certain that *sandhyā* (thrice daily services for *brāhmaṇs*) and other daily services will not be needed any more. And other daily services are over for you. . . . In that state, mere repetition of the name of *Rāma*, or *Hari*, or *Onkāra* is enough." . . .

M. has come here, walking from garden to garden, with Siddhu from Bārāhanagar. It is Sunday, 26th February, 15th *Phālgun*. It is a holiday, so he has come out for a walk. A little earlier, he was having a stroll in the garden of Prasanna Bannerjī. It was there that Siddhu said, "There is a beautiful garden on the bank of the Gangā. Will you like to see it? A *paramahansa* lives there."

Entering the garden through the main gate, M. and Siddhu came direct to Shri Ramakrishna's room. M. stands speechless as he beholds. He thinks, "How charming is this place! How charming is this man! How sweet is his talk! I don't feel like leaving this place!" . . .

As he comes out of the room with Siddhu, the sweet sound of *ārati* starts. Cymbals, bells and drums all begin to sound together. From the southern side of the garden, musical notes emerge from the *naubat* (kettle drum). Floating over the bosom of the Bhāgīrathī (Ganges), the musical notes begin to merge somewhere far, far away. The breeze of the spring is gentle and fragrant with the sweet odour of many a flower. Moonlight starts spreading. It seems as if preparations for the *ārati* of deities are afoot all around. Witnessing *ārati* in the twelve *Shiva* temples and in the temples of Rādhākānta and Bhavatārīṇī, M. is filled with supreme joy. Siddhu says, "This is Rāsmaṇī's temple. Here the gods are ministered everyday from morning till evening. Many holy guests and the poor come here."

*Mahendra Nath Gupta, Kathāmṛta 1:1.2, SRK1*

On another occasion, Mahendra Nath Gupta recalls:

While watching Mother *Kālī*'s *āratī* with the devotees, Ṭhākur (Shri Ramakrishna) goes into ecstasy. . . . With great care, he returns to his room with the devotees and sits down. He is still in ecstasy and talks to them in that state.

*Mahendra Nath Gupta, Kathāmṛita 4:21.5, SRK4*

See also: **pūjā**.

1. See “āratī,” *A to Z of Jainism*, AZJW.
2. See K.N. Upadhyaya, *Guru Ravidas*, GRPS p.122 (n.\*).

**ardās** (H/Pu) *Lit.* prayer, supplication; an offering to a deity; probably derived from the Persian *arz-dāsht* (prayer, supplication, petition, request, or address to a higher authority); a Sikh prayer used at the end of a service, after reciting daily prayers, at the completion of any religious activity, and before and after undertaking any other significant activity (e.g. “*Wāhiguru*, please bless me in the task that I am about to undertake” or “*Akāl Purukh*, having completed the hymn-singing, we ask for Your continued blessings so that we can continue in Your memory and remember You at all times”); usually performed standing up, with palms together. The words of the *ardās* have evolved and changed over time, and the prayer, at least in its current formulation, is not found in the *Ādi Granth*.<sup>1</sup>

Using *ardās* as a general term for prayer, Guru Amardās says that from God’s viewpoint, no words are required:

He knows everything, without being told:  
unto whom should we offer our prayers (*ardās*)?

*Guru Amardās, Ādi Granth 1420, AGK*

If prayer is necessary, says Guru Arjun, it should at least be to one (the *guru*) who can grant a gift worth having:

Offer your prayers (*ardās*) to Him  
who shall unite you with the Creator.  
The true *guru* is the Giver (*Dātā*) of the *Nām* (Name):  
His treasure is perfect and overflowing.

*Guru Arjun, Ādi Granth 49, AGK*

1. See “ardās,” *Wikipedia*, ret. July 2011.

**argha** (S), **mchod yon** (T) *Lit.* worth, price, value; something of value; respectful reception of a guest with offerings of water mixed with rice or flowers, or only water, perhaps scented; ceremonial water; the offerings themselves or the vessel used to make the offerings; in tantric Buddhist ritual, offerings made to the Buddha or to the various celestial *buddhas*, *bodhisattvas* and other deities, often comprising scented water, water with flowers and leaves floating in it, or water mixed with rice – all such offerings being accompanied by *mudrās* (gestures and postures), the recitation of *mantras*, and so on.

A number of *sūtras* and tantric texts provide detailed descriptions of rituals in which water offerings (*argha*) play an integral part. According to the story underlying the *Vairochana-abhisambodhi Sūtra*, the celestial *bodhisattva* Vajrapāṇi (‘Wielder of the *Vajra*’), also called Vajradhara (‘Holder of the *Vajra*’), asks the primal *buddha* Vairochana how he had attained “the knowledge of an omniscient one (*sarvajña-jñāna*)”<sup>1</sup> or perfect enlightenment. The *vajra* is the emblematic, adamantine ‘thunderbolt’ of tantric Buddhism, symbolizing (among other things) the power and immutability of Reality. The question and the ongoing dialogue provide the setting for the *sūtra* to expound tantric teachings and the details of various tantric rituals and meditations.

Among the key aspects of tantric teachings referred to in this *sūtra* are ‘seed syllables (*bījākshara*)’ and ‘letter gateways’. Seed syllables are regarded as the focused essence of a *mantra*, and are believed to encapsulate the essence of something, such as a deity or a subtle element, *etc.* In tantric Buddhism, each celestial *buddha* and *bodhisattva* has his own seed syllable. In a similar manner, letter gateways are also imbued with esoteric meaning. ‘A’ is the first sound one makes on opening the mouth, and according to the *Vairochana-abhisambodhi Sūtra*, the letter-gateway *A* is the “essence of all these *mantras*”.<sup>2</sup> It represents enlightenment and is associated with Vairochana.

Water offerings (*argha*) are a common feature of the rituals described in this and other *sūtras*:

When the Vajradhara Lord of Mysteries (*i.e.* Vajrapāṇi) had finished speaking thus, the World-Honoured One addressed him, saying, “Excellent, excellent, Lord of Mysteries! It is indeed excellent that you have asked the Tathāgata about this matter. You should listen attentively and consider it carefully as I now explain.”

The Lord of Mysteries said, “So be it, World-Honoured One. I am eager to listen.”

The Buddha addressed the Lord of Mysteries, saying, “One achieves success in attaining this by means of the letter-gateway *A*. Either in a place inhabited by monks, or in a mountain cave or in a clean chamber, one places the letter *A* on all one’s limbs and recites (the *mantra*) three hundred thousand times. Then, at the full moon,

one uses everything one has to make offerings until the *bodhisattvas* Samantabhadra, Mañjuśrī, Vajradhara and so on, or other holy divinities, appear before one and caress one's head, exclaiming, 'Excellent, practitioner!' One should then bow down, make obeisance and offer up *argha* water, whereupon one will achieve the *samādhi* of never forgetting the *bodhi*-mind.

"Again, if one repeatedly recites it with such lightness of body and mind, one will obtain purity of mind and purity of body wherever one is born. If one places the letter *A* on one's ear and recites it, one will obtain purity of the organ of hearing. If one performs exhalation and inhalation with the letter-gateway *A*, meditating three times daily, and if the practitioner is then able to maintain this, he will have longevity and live in the world for long aeons. If he wishes to be loved and respected by a *rāja* (king) and so on, then he makes the person who is to be won over into the letter-gateway *ha*, and giving him a *padma* (lotus) flower and himself holding a *shankha* (conch shell), they look at each other, whereupon they will engender joy."

*Vairocana-abhisambodhi Sūtra*, T18 848:19c; cf. VSSG pp.78–79

The *sūtra* then goes on to explain various tantric practices, and so it continues, interspersing details of rituals to be performed with tantric teachings.

Many of the instructions in the *sūtra* are for rituals performed entirely in the mind as a form of meditation. As the opening to one section of the *sūtra* begins:

Having thus purified himself with right actions,  
the practitioner dwells in meditation,  
visualizing his own *mantra* lord.

*Vairocana-abhisambodhi Sūtra*, T18 848:47c, VSSG p.219

In other passages, detailed instructions are given for the ambience, the scenery, and the offerings (*argha*) to be conjured up in the imagination:

Music plays in harmonious rhythms and with lovely voices.  
Inside the palace imagine pure and wondrous flasks and *argha* vessels;  
The king of jewelled trees is in full bloom,  
and the palace is illuminated with *maṇi* (jewelled) lamps.  
There are handmaidens of *samādhis*, *dhāraṇīs*,  
the ten stages, and tenfold freedom.

*Vairocana-abhisambodhi Sūtra*, T18 848:48a–b, VSSG p.221

Mentally reciting the *argha*-mantra, "*Namaḥ samanta-buddhānāṃ, gagana samā sama, svāhā!*" (I bow before all the *buddhas*, of rank unequalled in

the heavens! Blessings!)”, and following various ritual instructions – all performed in the imagination – the *sūtra* maintains:

You will achieve *siddhi* (perfection)  
 and quickly fulfil the unsurpassed vow,  
 so as to make the lord of your *mantra*  
 and *vidyā* (knowledge) deities rejoice.  
 The *argha* water to be offered having been fully prepared in advance,  
 use your own *mantra* and seal (*mudrā*)  
 to empower it according to the rules.  
 Offer it up to the *sugatas* (*buddhas*) for bathing their unsullied bodies.  
*Vairochana-abhisambodhi Sūtra, T18 848:49a–b, VSSG p.224*

1. *Vairochana-abhisambodhi Sūtra, T18 848:1b, VSSG p.4.*
2. *Vairochana-abhisambodhi Sūtra, T18 848:17b, VSSG p.68.*

**ariā** (Mo) *Lit.* representation, manifestation, likeness, semblance; concept, form, idea, feeling; in general, a representation of something, either material or immaterial; a representation of something used in Māori sympathetic magic; the material representation of an immaterial *atua* (god), such as a *whakapakoko* (godstick); the material incarnation of an inferior *atua* as a lizard, a bird, a dog, a stone, a stream, and so on. Superior *atua* do not have such an *ariā*.

The New Zealand ethnographer Elsdon Best (1856–1931) describes how an *ariā* of an *atua* can be either a non-material or material representation – either a “shadowy semblance” or a physical object that represents the god:

The Māori has conceived the idea of the shadowy semblance of a spirit, or spirit god, that is the *ariā*, *āhua*, or *ata* (form) of a *wairua* (spirit). At the same time, in order to possess a material symbol of an immaterial essence of spirit, he would often utilize some object connected with the same in some way.

*Elsdon Best, Maori Religion and Mythology, MRM2 p.34*

(*Ariā*) is a term of considerable interest, and one that illustrates a phase of mentality common to all Polynesian peoples. It denotes the conception of a material representation of an immaterial being or condition; thus the *ariā* of an *atua* is its form of incarnation, the form in which it is visible to mortal eyes. . . .

These two meanings seem contradictory, but the persistent underlying meaning is that of representation; such representation may be material or immaterial. . . . A native explained to me that, as he sat in my tent, he saw indistinctly the form (*ariā*) of a person outside. The



Arawa folk employ the word *ārika* to denote the form of incarnation of an *atua*. Thus one, in speaking of the god *Makawe* to me, said, “*Ko te matakōkiri tōna ārikatanga* (the meteor is his form of incarnation” – i.e. visible form). In some cases *ariā* may be rendered as ‘idea’ or ‘feeling’, as in the expression *ariā aroha* (feeling of sympathy, etc.).

We do not hear of the superior gods possessing any *ariā*, but only inferior ones. In many cases such a visible form of an *atua* was a lizard, in some cases a bird. Among the Tūhoe folk lizards, birds, the *whē* (mantis), dogs, stars, meteors, and the rainbow were viewed as *ariā* of inferior gods. In one case, a lock of hair represented an *atua*. When *Hine-nui-te-Pō* (goddess or guardian of death) obtained a drop of Māui’s blood to serve as his *ariā*, she was enabled to use it as an *ohonga* (medium) in sympathetic magic, and so cause his death. *Ohonga* is anything that is taken from a person in order to serve as a medium between the spells of black or white magic and their objective, such as a shred of garment, a hair, a drop of spittle, etc. Something that has been in contact with the objective was ever the *desideratum* (desired object).

*Elsdon Best, Spiritual and Mental Concepts of the Maori, SMMB pp.16–17*

*Ariā*, it seems, can be more or less anything. Often, the reason for a particular representation is lost in the past:

At the junction of the Waikare and Whakatāne streams is a large stone that is the *ariā* of one Wheterau, a chief of Ngāti-Ha who flourished about two hundred and fifty years ago. In the same valley, the Ohora and Kanihi streams are the *ariā* of two persons of the same names who lived some four hundred years ago. In the following generation lived one Okiwa, whose *ariā* is a dog that is yet heard howling in the grim canyons of Whakatāne at night. The breath of that spectre hound is the local wind called *okiwa* at Ruatoki. In the same tribal district, the *ariā* of Tamoechau is a tree, that of *Rongo-te-mauriuri* a pond on the summit of Maungapōhatu, and that of *Takuahi-te-ka* a rock. . . .

The *tapu mānuka* tree at Whakatāne, which was the *mauri* (life force) of the district, was the *ariā* of life, health, and general welfare.

The *ariā* of *Hine-ruarangi*, an ancestress, is a cormorant, which is the tribal banshee of the Ngāti-Whare folk of Te Whaiti. The *ariā* of *Hine-pūkohu*, the Mist Maid, is the white mist you see rising from the breast of the Earth Mother when Tama-nui-te-ra (the sun) thrusts Tāwera (morning star) up into the realm of *Wātea* (personified form of space).

A hill named Ruatahuna is the *ariā* of the district of that name – that is, it is the *tino* (precise place) from which the district derives its name.

The *ariā* of *Karukaru*, an *atua* of the Whanganui district, is an owl – the common morepork. This *atua* achieved fame as a protector of human welfare, as, for instance, in warning persons of attempts being made to bewitch them.

*Elsdon Best, Spiritual and Mental Concepts of the Maori, SMMB pp.17–18*

See also: **āhua**, **māwe**.

**ascension** (L. *ascensio*) The passing of Jesus from earth to heaven, according to the story related in *Mark*,

After the Lord had spoken to them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God.

*Mark 16:19; cf. KJV*

And likewise in *Luke*:

And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven.

*Luke 24:51, KJV*

Luke repeats the same story in *Acts*, with the addition of various embellishments:

And when he had said these things, while they were looking on, he was lifted up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they were still gazing steadfastly into heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood beside them in white robes, who said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus who has been is taken up from you into heaven will come in the same manner as you have seen him go into heaven.”

*Acts 1:9–11; cf. KJV*

Like many other such stories in the world’s religious literature, the account bears the hallmarks of a religious anecdote; yet it is upon these few words that the Christian belief in Jesus’ ascension into heaven is founded. The period of forty days between Jesus’ resurrection and ascension is mentioned in *Acts* alone.<sup>1</sup> Being hidden by a cloud is common biblical imagery for the presence of God.<sup>2</sup> In *Matthew* the story ends, without an ascension, soon after the resurrection; and the account in *John*, in chapter twenty, which is generally agreed to be a later addition, has the recently risen Jesus speak to Mary Magdalene of his imminent ascension:

Jesus said unto her, "Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father. But go to my brethren, and say to them, 'I ascend to my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.'"

*John 20:17; cf. KJV*

Chapter twenty ends the gospel with a neat concluding verse; but that is not the end of the story, for in yet a further addition, chapter twenty-one has the risen Jesus once again appearing to his disciples, this time without mentioning any ascension.

With the passage of time, the ascension gained in religious significance. As a Christian feast, the ascension was not celebrated as a distinct event until the fourth century. Prior to that time it was part of the celebrations associated with the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. In Christian theology, the ascension is regarded as the final redemptive act, by which all who are 'in Christ' can participate in his Godhead.

Accounts concerning the ascension of prophets into heaven are not unique to Jesus, and in the case of story told in *Acts*, the author is relating to similar stories, both biblical and otherwise. In a wonderfully exotic image, Elijah is described as having ascended bodily in a whirlwind into heaven, carried in a "chariot of fire" drawn by "horses of fire", while talking to his disciple and successor, Elisha:

And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.

*2 Kings 2:11, KJV*

Of the prophet Enoch, too, it is said: "And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him."<sup>3</sup> The verse is ambiguous, but the rabbis of later Judaism interpreted it to mean that he was also translated bodily into heaven. In *3 Enoch*, he is conveyed to heaven in a storm chariot, much like Elijah.<sup>4</sup>

Mystically, the 'ascent' to heaven is understood symbolically, just as sitting on the "right hand of God" is not to be taken literally. Mystics have always described the ascent of the soul to God as an inner spiritual experience, and there is no reason to presume that the ascent of Jesus was any different. Angelus Silesius is hinting at this when he writes:

If upward you can soar and let God have His way,  
then this has in your spirit become Ascension Day.

*Angelus Silesius, Cherubic Wanderer 4:56, CW p.90*

In general, however, Christians have accepted that although the soul ascends spiritually, Jesus ascended physically, sometimes explaining his ascended

body as being like the spiritualized body in which, according to St Paul, all are expected to arise on the Day of Resurrection.<sup>5</sup>

See also: **ascent of the soul** (8.1), **resurrection**.

1. *Acts* 1:3.
2. *E.g. Exodus* 13:21–22, 16:10; *Leviticus* 16:2; *Numbers* 16:42; *Deuteronomy* 4:11; *1 Kings* 8:10–12; *Job* 22:14, 37:15–16; *Psalms* 97:2.
3. *Genesis* 5:24, *KJV*.
4. *3 Enoch* 6:1, 7:1.
5. *E.g. Cloud of Unknowing* 59; *cf. 1 Corinthians* 15:40–54.

**Ascension Day** An annual festival, also known as Holy Thursday, celebrating Christian belief in the ascension of Jesus into heaven, on the fortieth day (hence a Thursday) of Eastertide, the festival that commemorates his resurrection on Easter Sunday. There are some differences between the various Churches regarding the calculation of the date and the rites associated with the festival. See **ascension**.

**asht(a)-mangal(a)** (S/H), **bkra shis rtags brgyad** (T), **bā jíxiáng** (C), **hachikichijō** (J) *Lit.* eight (*ashṭa*, *brgyad*, *bā*, *hachi*) auspicious things (*mangala*, *bkra shis*, *jíxiáng*, *kichijō*); eight auspicious signs (*brgyad*), symbols, or omens; eight lucky things; a collection of Indian symbols of good fortune, current in Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism, that have become widespread in Nepal and Tibet, and are also to be found in China. Representations of the eight *mangala* are commonly found in art, decoration and iconography, both secular and religious, including their portrayal on mundane items such as fabrics, furniture, wall decorations, architraves, ramparts, and so on. In Tibet, a part of the traditional welcome extended to visiting religious teachers consists of the eight symbols marked out on the ground in flour or coloured powders.

There are many different representations of the eight items, together with various interpretations of their symbolic meaning. One Buddhist list includes a lotus (*padma*), an endless knot (*shrīvatsa*, T. *dpal be'u*), a pair of golden fish (*suvarṇa-matsya*, T. *gser nya*), a parasol (*chhattra*, T. *gdugs*), a victory banner (*ketu*, T. *rgyal mtshan*), a full water pot (*kalasha*) or vase full of treasures (*dhana-kumbha*, T. *gter gyi bum pa*), a white conch shell (*shankha*, T. *dung dkar*), and a wheel (*chakra*, T. *'khor lo*). In Tibetan *Vajrayāna* Buddhism, the eight symbols have been deified as goddesses, each holding their associated symbol, signifying their primary attribute. Another Tibetan tradition sees them as forming the body of the Buddha. In Chinese Buddhism, the eight are regarded as symbolic of eight organs of the Buddha's body.<sup>1</sup>

Of these, the endless knot (*shrīvatsa*), represented by a closed loop or net of intertwining lines, signifies the boundless wisdom and compassion of the Buddha or the interrelatedness of everything. It is often listed as one of the eighty secondary marks (*ashṭī-anuvyañjana*) of a *buddha* or great man (*mahāpurusha*), to be found on the soles of his feet.

Similarly, the wheel (*chakra*) is the *dharmachakra*, the wheel of the Law, a symbol with many aspects, but whose eight spokes are generally said to symbolize the Buddha's teaching and the noble eightfold path.

Likewise, the lotus, whose pristine flowers float in the light on the surface of the water, above the darkness and mud beneath, effortlessly shedding drops of water from its leaves and petals, represents detachment from desire and materiality, its face always to the light.

The full water pot (*kalasha*) signifies long life, and the treasure vase indicates the fulfilment of spiritual aspiration.

The parasol, symbolic of royalty, identifies the Buddha as the *chakravartin*, the universal monarch.

In Hinduism, the list of eight symbols varies from place to place, region to region, and within different cultural groupings. In North India, they are often represented as a lion (*simha*) symbolizing regal qualities, a bull (*vṛishaba*) symbolizing strength and power, the multi-symbolic serpent (*nāga*), a full water jar (*kalasha*), a necklace (*vijayanti*), a kettledrum (*bhera*), a fan (*vya-jana*), and a lamp (*dīpa*). In South India, they commonly appear as a fly whisk (*chamara*), a full pitcher (*kalasha*), a mirror (*darpaṇa*), an elephant goad (*ankusha*), a kettledrum (*bhera*), a lamp (*dīpa*), a flag or banner (*dhvaja*), and a pair of fish (*matsya-yugma*).

In Jainism, the prevalence of these symbols as a part of worship in ancient times is indicated by their presence on votive (sacred, consecrated) tablets (*āyāgapaṭas*) from Mathurā, dating from the second or third centuries CE. They are also mentioned by Jain *āchāryas* such as the *Shvetāmbara* Hemachandra (C12th CE).<sup>2</sup> *Digambaras* and *Shvetāmbaras* identify different auspicious items. *Shvetāmbaras* list a *svastika*, an elaborate *svastika* (*nandyāvarta*), an endless knot (*shrīvatsa*) in the centre of a *Tīrthankara*'s chest, a powder flask (*vardha-mānaka*), a throne or seat (*bhadrāsana*), a pair of fishes (*matsya-yugma*), a full water jar (*kalasha*), and a mirror (*darpaṇa*). *Digambaras* list a gilded vase (*bhṛingāra*), a fly whisk (*chamara*), a banner (*dhvaja*), a fan (*vya-jana*), an umbrella (*chhattra*), a seat of honour (*supratishṭha*), a full pitcher (*kalasha*), and a mirror (*darpaṇa*).<sup>3</sup>

1. See "aṣṭamaṅgala," *Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*, PDB.

2. Hemachandra, *Trishashṭi-shalākā-purusha-charitra* 1, in *TSP1* pp.112–13, 190.

3. See "aṣṭamaṅgala," *A to Z of Jainism*, AZJW.

**ashṭa-dravya pūjā, ashṭaka pūjā** (S/H) *Lit.* eight-substance (*ashṭa-dravya*) worship (*pūjā*), eightfold (*ashṭaka*) worship; a daily *Digambara* image-worshipping ceremony for laypeople. See **pūjā**.

**ashṭa-prakārī pūjā** (S/H) *Lit.* worship (*pūjā*) of eight (*ashṭa*) kinds (*prakāra*); a daily *Shvetāmbara* image-worshipping ceremony for laypeople using eight kinds of substance. See **pūjā**.

**ashvamedha-yajña** (S) *Lit.* horse (*ashva*) sacrifice (*medha*) ceremony (*yajña*), generally said to have been performed by ancient warrior kings of India, and considered highly meritorious.

It is said that in Vedic times, when a monarch wanted to assert his dominion over a subordinate country, he would arrange an *ashvamedha-yajña*. After the performance of various ceremonies, a richly caparisoned white horse was allowed to wander freely for a year, attended by a guard of three hundred warriors. Wherever the horse wandered, the ruler of that territory could either permit the horse to pass, thereby acknowledging the king's supremacy or, if he challenged the king's supremacy, he could stop the horse, and the king would challenge the local ruler in battle. If the king won, having established his supremacy, the horse would be allowed to continue its wanderings.

Having completed its mission, the horse was then brought back to the original king and a large feast prepared, with the horse dressed ceremonially to partake in the victory celebrations. At this stage, the horse was sacrificed.

The *yajña* is described in Indian mythology, though whether such a ceremony was ever carried out in practice is unknown. Even so, like many rituals and myths, there is a foundation of mystical meaning underlying it. Possibly, what was once a mystical allegory or parable was turned into this elaborate ritual.

Esoterically, the horse symbolizes the sense-dominated body, while the king represents the soul who has to fight many battles to establish his supremacy over the area of creation that comes under the dominion of the mind and senses. These are the subordinate kings and rulers.

The horse sacrifice is described at length in one of the Hindu manuals of priestcraft, the *Shatapatha Brāhmaṇa*,<sup>1</sup> but is given a symbolic interpretation in the *Upanishads*. According to the *Bṛihadāranyaka Upanishad*, the sacrificial horse symbolizes the physical universe:

The head of the sacrificial horse is the dawn,  
the eye is the sun, its breath is the wind,  
the open mouth is the *Vaishvānara* (universal) fire;

The body of the sacrificial horse is the year,  
 the back is the sky, the belly is the atmosphere,  
 the hoof is the earth, the sides are the (four) directions,  
 the ribs are the four intermediate directions, the limbs are the seasons,  
 the joints are the months and fortnights,  
 the feet are the days and nights, the bones are the stars,  
 the flesh is the clouds;  
 The food in the stomach is the sand,  
 the blood vessels are the rivers,  
 the liver and the lungs are the mountains,  
 the hair is the herbs and trees.  
 The forepart is the rising sun,  
 the hind part is the setting sun;  
 When it yawns, then it lightens,  
 when it shakes itself, it thunders,  
 when it urinates, then it rains;  
 Its neighing (*vāch*), indeed, is the Voice (*Vāch*).

*Bṛihadāranyaka Upanishad 1:1.1; cf. PU p.149, U3 p.87*

The description of the sacrificial horse as a microcosm of the physical creation mirrors that of the *Purusha Sūkta* of the *Ṛig Veda*, where the primal *Purusha* (Man) is depicted as the microcosm from whose members a part of the physical universe is created.<sup>2</sup>

Esoterically, the *ashvamedha-yajña* means that the human form, which is a microcosm of the entire creation (the macrocosm), has to be sacrificed, given up or transcended in order to attain the supraphysical. The sacrifice of the horse implies conquest of the body and the senses through the fire of *tapas* (austerity):<sup>3</sup>

The *Bṛihadāranyaka Upanishad* opens with an account of the horse sacrifice (*ashvamedha*), and interprets it as a meditative act in which the individual offers up the whole world in place of the horse, and by the renunciation of the world attains spiritual autonomy in place of earthly sovereignty.

*S. Radhakrishnan, Principal Upanishads, PU pp.49–50*

In the Indian epic legend, the *Mahābhārata*, Kṛishṇa advises the Pāṇḍavas, after their victory over the Kauravas, that they should hold an *ashvamedha-yajña*. But he also stipulates that the *yajña* will not be considered successful unless the celestial bell sound is heard at its completion.

In order to ensure that the celestial bell sound is heard, the Pāṇḍavas invite all the high caste *brāhmaṇs* and other holy men from all parts of the

country. The invitation implies that the inner sound cannot be heard without the aid of a saint.

When the sacrifice has been made, however, the bell sound is not heard. Kṛishṇa therefore uses his inner vision to find out why, and discovers that a low caste, but highly evolved sage, Supach, is absent. And without the presence and blessings of a true saint, the celestial sound cannot be heard. The high-caste Pāṇḍavas had arrogantly assumed that everyone would turn out for a free meal without any personal invitation on their part. Spiritual blessings, however, cannot be bought by the rich and influential like material commodities. The desire of the soul must be sincere. The *guru* has to be personally invited into the heart of the devotee, before he will manifest himself there.

Supach is therefore given a courteous and personal invitation by Queen Draupadī. But at first he refuses, until her sincerity and humility reach a point where he agrees to come. The bell sound, however, is still not heard, and the all-knowing Kṛishṇa now points out that it is because Queen Draupadī is still thinking arrogant thoughts concerning the low-caste sage. As soon as her mind is humbled, the bell sound is heard.

The eighteenth-century Indian mystic Paltū alludes to the story, providing a further indication of its mystical nature:

Hermits and sages grace the *yajña* of the king,  
but without the presence of Supach,  
the bell sound is not heard.  
Of his high caste or rank, O Paltū,  
no one should be proud:  
For love alone counts in the court of the Lord.

*Paltū, Bānī 1, Kuṇḍalī 218, PSB1 p.91*

In the *ashvamedha-yajña*, then, the horse denotes the sense-dominated body and the physical universe. This is a common metaphor in Vedic literature. In the *Kaṭha Upanishad*, the powerful and fugitive senses (the ten *indriyas* – five motor and five sensory) are symbolized as ten horses, with the soul as the lord or rider of the chariot.<sup>4</sup> The sacrifice of the horse thus symbolizes the withdrawal of the attention from the physical body (*piṇḍa*) by conquering the attraction or pull of the senses, and bringing it to the third eye. The soul then gains access to the astral realms where the sound of the big bell or gong is heard.

As the allegory is told in the *Mahābhārata*, the story has even more meaning to it. Firstly, in the absence of the true sage, the celestial sound is not heard. Even when he is found, the devotee has first to develop some degree of sincerity before the sage will agree to come into the devotee's residence, *i.e.* to initiate the soul. But even then, the sound is not heard automatically. First, the disciple has to humble his mind and reduce his ego, before he can gain access to the inner realms, and actually hear the bell sound.



That is why the *ashvamedha-yajña* is said to be complete only when the big bell or gong resounds in the (inner) sky, and why, perhaps, this *yajña* was regarded as so meritorious.

Understood from a material viewpoint, the *Nārada Smṛiti* observes that the quest for Truth is of far greater significance than many *ashvamedha-yajñas*:

If (the merit of) a thousand horse-sacrifices (*ashvamedhas*) and Truth are weighed in a balance, Truth will outweigh the thousand sacrifices.

*Nārada Smṛiti* 1:15.211; cf. *SBE33* p.93

Similarly, the *Avadhūta Upanishad*:

Through all-consuming, correct knowledge, the *avadhūta* (renunciate) performs *ashvamedha* sacrifice within (himself). That is the greatest sacrifice and the greatest *yoga*.

*Avadhūta Upanishad* 7; cf. *SUAR* p.3

Here, “correct knowledge” refers to mystical or spiritual knowledge that is experienced within.

See also: **Ashvattha** (3.1), **yajña**.

1. *Shatapatha Brāhmaṇa* 13:1–5.
2. *Ṛig Veda*, *Purusha Sūkta* 10:90.1–16.
3. *Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upanishad* 1:2.6–7.
4. *Kaṭha Upanishad* 1:3.3–4.

**āstika** (S), **atthika** (Pa) *Lit.* a believer in the existence (of something); hence, one who believes in the existence of God, the soul, the higher worlds, *karma* and reincarnation, and so on; from *āsti* (there is, there exists); a pious, orthodox and faithful Hindu who accepts the authority of the *Vedas*; in *Mahāyāna* Buddhism, one who believes that external phenomena are both real and eternal; contrasted with *nāstika* (from *na āsti*, there is not, it does not exist), which refers, in the Hindu tradition, to someone who denies the authority of the *Vedas*; hence, *āstika-dṛishṭi* (Pa. *atthika-diṭṭhi*) and *āstika-vāda* (Pa. *atthika-vāda*), which refer to the doctrine or way of the believer. *Āstikya* (belief in God) is one of the ten *niyamas* (essentials) of *aśtāṅga yoga*.<sup>1</sup>

In Jainism, an *āstika* is someone who has faith in the Jain precepts, *i.e.* existence of the eternal soul, *karma* and reincarnation, *puṇya* (merit), *pāpa* (sin), the possibility of enlightenment and liberation, and so forth.

In Buddhism, an *atthika* refers to someone who believes in the doctrines of reincarnation and *karma*, while a *natthika* is a nihilist who denies the law

of *karma* and its consequences, who claims that the present life is all there is, that there has been no previous life nor will there be a future one, that nothing is knowable, that for an individual death is the end of everything, and that there is therefore no sense or merit in doing good deeds since all values are useless and life itself is meaningless. Hence, *nāstika-dṛishṭi* (Pa. *natthika-diṭṭhi*) and *nāstika-vāda* (Pa. *natthika-vāda*) refer to the doctrine or way of the nonbeliever.

The renowned Sanskrit grammarian Pāṇini (c.6th–4th BCE) defines a *nāstika* simply as someone who does not accept the existence of life after death. The commonly expressed Hindu perspective, however, is found in the *Manu Smṛiti* (c.2nd BCE – C3rd CE):

Any *brāhmaṇ*, who by means of logic, tries to bring these *śāstras* into disrepute, shall be excommunicated from society as a *nāstika*, a reviler of the *Vedas*.

*Manu Smṛiti* 2:11

Broadly speaking, the various systems (*darshanas*) of Indian philosophy can be divided into two categories – *āstika* and *nāstika*. The *āstika* systems (regarded as orthodox) accept the validity of the *Vedas*, while the *nāstika* (unorthodox or heterodox) systems do not. Hence, Buddhism, Jainism and *Chārvāka* (materialism) are commonly categorized by Hinduism as *nāstika*, while the other six systems – *Nyāya* (logical), *Vaisheshika* (atomic), *Sāṃkhya* (dualist), *Yoga*, *Pūrva Mīmāṃsā* (earlier enquiry) and *Uttara Mīmāṃsā* (latter enquiry), also called *Vedānta* – are *āstika* (orthodox). In present times, *yoga* and *Vedānta* are the most prevalent.

From the Hindu perspective, Jains and Buddhists, although accepting the principle of *karma* and reincarnation, are classed as *nāstika* and unorthodox because they reject the Vedic rituals and sacrifices (*yajñas*), the caste system, and the notions of an eternal soul and a creator God.

See also: **Indian Traditions** (1.11), **natthika-diṭṭhi** (8.1), **uccheda-diṭṭhi** (8.1).

1. E.g. *Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā* 1:16, *HYPM*; *Shāṇḍilya Upanishad* 1:2.

**atheism** From the Greek *a* (negative prefix) + *theos* (god); the belief that there is no God; the converse of theism; not a philosophy in itself, but more a general designation applied to individuals or schools of thought. The term has a wide and unclear application. There are many, for instance, who have pointed out that the term ‘God’ is used for such a wide variety of vague and indeterminate concepts that it makes no sense to say that one believes in

God or not. Others deny the existence of a supreme Lord as conceived by the three Semitic religions, or of a God possessed of any anthropomorphic qualities whatsoever, yet believe in the existence of an unnamed Power or Source. The influential twentieth-century Protestant theologian, Paul Tillich, for example, believed the God of theistic belief to be no more than an idol, a human construct. Some might therefore have called him an atheist. According to Tillich, God is not *a* being, supreme or otherwise; nor is He an infinite being above finite beings; God, he felt, is “Being itself”, the essential ground of all being and meaning.

It has been observed many times that it is impossible to prove or disprove the existence of God by rational means. Belief or disbelief in a supreme Deity is normally based upon an intuitive feeling in the consciousness of each individual, which a person then tries to justify by rational argument. This is why mystics insist on the self-revealing significance of direct, personal experience, and spiritual practice as the way to attain that experience. Then a person will know the truth of the matter for himself, though he can never convey his experience, his understanding or his conviction to others.

See also: **agnosticism, monotheism, polytheism.**

**āvāsa** (S/Pa) *Lit.* abode, residence, dwelling, house, home; in Buddhism, a place used as a dwelling by monks during the rainy-season retreat (*vassa*); usually within a monastery or on the outskirts of a village; a place where otherwise itinerant monks and nuns would live in temporary huts (*vihāra*) with just the bare necessities during the rains retreat.

In the time of the Buddha, it was customary for wealthy lay devotees of the Buddha to donate land, parks and gardens to be used for temporary accommodation during the rainy season, the sites being abandoned at the end of the retreat. Over time, however, such places became more permanent monastic sites, used again and again in future years. Monks also began to construct their own huts within the monastery or near villages, which were their responsibility to maintain. Proximity of the *āvāsa* to villages was necessary to allow the monks to continue receiving alms from the residents and in return to impart teaching and counsel concerning the *Dhamma*.

Details concerning the kind of structures and building materials permitted for temporary dwellings are given in the *Vinaya* (code of monastic conduct). According to the story, the instructions arose from an incident in which a somewhat impractical monk has a dwelling built for himself, which collapses when he overloads it with a heavy roof and plasters the walls. Rather than redesign a more robust dwelling, he repeats the same mistake again and again. In the process, he tramples down the cornfield of a *brāhmaṇ* farmer when collecting materials for the next iteration of his serially collapsing residence.

When the *brāhmaṇ* complains, the Buddha rebukes the monk for being so stupid, and gives instructions on the construction of a dwelling suitable for occupation during the rainy season. The use of tiles, stones, plaster, thatch or leaves as roofing materials are detailed as offences requiring expiation.<sup>1</sup>

Like the rest of the Pali canon, the *Vinaya Piṭaka* is set as stories, discourses and sayings of the Buddha. Scholars, however, have often expressed doubts as to the authenticity of the text, which attributes to the Buddha an extensive set of detailed and exhaustive rules on all aspects of monastic life, and it is generally reckoned to have been written some time after the Buddha's death.

See also: **varsha**.

1. *Vinaya Piṭaka, Sutta Vibhanga, Pācittiya* 19, PTSV4 pp.47–48.

**āvashyak(a)** (S/H), **āvassaya** (Pk) *Lit.* obligatory duty or action; the six essential, daily practices or rites performed by Jain mendicant monks; recommended for the laity, for practice either daily or less frequently, but especially during the four months (*chāturmāsa*) of the monsoon; from the Sanskrit *avasha* (absence of will, obligatory). Zealous performance of the *āvashyakas*, known as *āvashyaka-parihāri*, is one of the sixteen *bhāvanās* (meritorious practices). The purpose of the *āvashyakas* is as a frequent reminder to the monk of the purpose to which he has dedicated his life. The six *āvashyakas* are generally listed as:<sup>1</sup>

1. *Sāmāyika*. Serenity, tranquillity, equanimity; inner balance of mind, leading to balanced outer conduct; meditation. Having taken the *sāmāyika-vrata* (vow of *sāmāyika*), a monk seeks inner serenity by devoting time, three times daily, to detaching the senses from material things, to constant awareness of his own inner being, and to seeking oneness with the higher self.
2. *Stuti*. Praise, eulogy, adoration; also known as *Chaturviṃshati Stava*, which implies recitation of the hymn *Chaturviṃshati Stava*, meaning 'Praise (*stava*) of the Twenty-Four (*chaturviṃshati*)' *Tīrthankaras*.
3. *Vandana*. Ritualized reverence (*vandana*) for *arahantas* (enlightened ones), *siddhas* (perfected and liberated ones) and *āchāryas* (teachers) of an individual's particular sub-tradition; also called, more specifically, *guru-vandana*. The intention is to inculcate love, humility and gratitude, and to preserve the mind from impure thoughts.
4. *Pratikramaṇa*. Going (*kramaṇa*) back (*prati*); stepping back, returning; a rite of confession, admission of and repentance for faults, bad thoughts, misdeeds, or contravention of vows.

5. *Kāyotsarga*. Abandonment (*utsarga*) of the body (*kāya*); mental detachment from the body and all things associated with it; meditation; often practised briefly along with *sāmāyika* and *pratikramaṇa*.
6. *Pratyākhyāna*. Renunciation or abandonment of anything, especially particular foods or activities, for certain pre-determined periods of time; self-denial; a formal statement or vow to engage for a certain period in a particular religious or spiritual activity, such as fasting or some other specific dietary restriction; usually made before a mendicant teacher or before the image of a *Tīrthankara*. In some respects, *pratyākhyāna* is the future-looking equivalent of *pratikramaṇa* (confession of past transgressions).

Although described as separate practices in early texts such as the *Āvaśhyaka Sūtra* (possibly C7th CE), several of these practices are combined in modern times into a single rite, such as the assimilation of *Chaturviṃśati Stava*, *guru-vandana* and *pratyākhyāna* into the rites of *pratikramaṇa*. Modern rites, which can vary between the *Shvetāmbara*, *Digambara* and other Jain sub-traditions, are generally based upon manuals compiled by mendicant monks from more ancient Jain texts and commentaries thereon. The *Āvaśhyaka Sūtra* has been the subject of several commentaries by Jain *āchāryas* of the past, including the *Āvaśhyaka Chūrṇi* and *Āvaśhyaka Nirukti* of uncertain authorship, and the *Āvaśhyaka Vṛitti* of Haribhadra (c.C7th CE).

Some variations exist in the list of the six *āvaśhyakas*. Kundakunda (traditionally dated to C2nd–3rd CE) lists them as *pratikramaṇa*, *pratyākhyāna*, *ālochanā*, *kāyotsarga*, *sāmāyika*, and *paramabhakti*. In the more usual listing, *ālochanā* (admission of past transgressions) precedes and is a part of *pratyākhyāna*, while *paramabhakti* (supreme devotion) includes both *vandana* and *stuti*.<sup>2</sup>

See also: **kāyotsarga** (8.5), **pratikramaṇa**, **pratyākhyāna**, **sāmāyika** (8.5), **vandana**.

1. See “āvaśyakas,” *A to Z of Jainism*, AZJW.

2. Kundakunda, *Niyamasāra* 83–140.

**āyambīl** (Pk) A *Shvetāmbara* Jain practice of eating only one meal a day, which is comprised of bland or ‘sour’ foods such as simple boiled rice, cereals and pulses, or a gruel made thereof, prepared without the use of oil, spices, ghee, sugar, salt, curds, or any fresh or dried fruit or vegetables; one of the many varieties of Jain fast. Some mendicants adhere to this diet for long periods, even their entire life. In places where many Jain families are living, special halls (*āyambīl sālā*) are provided where boiled water and *āyambīl* food is

served. The preferred time for observing this kind of dietary restriction is during the twice-yearly, nine-day festival of *Olī* (Pk) or *Avalī* (S).

The Prakrit *āyambil* is of uncertain etymology, but is probably from the Sanskrit *āchāmāmla*. *Āyāma* derives from *āchāma*, which denotes ‘water in which rice has been boiled’, and *amla* (Pa. *ambila*), which means ‘sour’. The meaning is thus, ‘rice water with sour gruel’ or ‘rice water with sour lumps of rice’. Alternatively, *bil* could be related to the Pali *bila* (part, bit, piece, lump), in which case *āyambil* would mean ‘rice water with lumps’. Either way, the meaning is much the same<sup>1</sup> (and the taste appalling!).

See also: **Olī**, **upavāsa**.

1. See John Meyer, *Hindu Tales*, HTAE pp.87–88 (n.1).

**bāng-i mu’azzin** (P) *Lit.* call (*bāng*) of the muezzin (*mu’azzin*), cry of the muezzin, the muezzin being the Muslim official who calls the faithful to prayer, five times a day, from the minaret of a mosque, crying out, “I witness that there is no god but God;” the call to prayer (A. *adhān*).

Suggesting, perhaps, where the source of the real call to the higher prayer of inner divine communion originates, Sufis have used the terms *Bāng-i āsmānī* (Call from the heavens, Call from on high), *Bāng-i Haqq* (Voice of God, Call of Truth), and *Bāng-i ilāhī* (divine Call, divine Voice) as terms for the divine creative power that calls souls from on high to return to their heavenly home.

See also: **adhān**.

**bet ha-mikdash** (He) *Lit.* house (*bet*) of holiness (*ha-mikdash*); the Temple of Jerusalem. *Mikdash* is derived from *kodesh* (holy). Although the Temple was regarded as quintessentially Jewish, some regarded it as universal. As it says in *Isaiah*, “For my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples”<sup>1</sup> – a sentiment later quoted by Jesus when he found that the Temple had become a centre for commerce.<sup>2</sup>

The Jerusalem Temple developed from the original tabernacle (*mishkan*), also known as the sanctuary (*mikdash*) or the tent of the meeting (*ohel mo’ed*), which had accompanied the ancient Israelites during their wanderings in the desert. In its *kodesh kodashim* (holy of holies), the *mishkan* contained the ark of the covenant. When the Israelites settled in Canaan, the ark was placed in a sanctuary at Shiloh. Other sanctuaries were also built, including one in Arad (in the Negev desert) which has recently been excavated, but none served as a central focus or shrine. However, in the tenth century BCE, King David unified the Israelites under his dominion, and in the ninth century BCE

his son, King Solomon, built the First Temple in Jerusalem. It was a rather elaborate structure and the Bible provides detailed and specific instructions on how it was to be built.<sup>3</sup> This temple was destroyed in 586 BCE during the Babylonian conquest, and was rebuilt in 520 BCE when the Jews returned from exile. The Second Temple was ultimately destroyed by the Romans in 70 CE. During the time it existed, it was the spiritual centre of the Jewish people. The Western Wall (Wailing Wall), which has become a holy place of worship for Jews, is all that is left of that Second Temple.

The Temple has been traditionally interpreted as the centre of the world, the source from which the world was created; and its design has been given a symbolic and spiritual interpretation by many students of Jewish mysticism and the occult. According to a passage in the *Midrash* (biblical commentaries):

As the navel is set in the centre of the human body,  
so is the land of Israel the navel of the world, ...  
situated in the centre of the world,  
and Jerusalem in the centre of the land of Israel,  
and the sanctuary in the centre of Jerusalem,  
and the holy place in the centre of the sanctuary,  
and the ark in the centre of the holy place,  
and the foundation stone before the holy place,  
because from it the world was founded.

*Midrash Tanḥuma, Kedoshim 10, in MTSB p.78*

The Malbim (Rabbi Meir Leibush of Russia and Romania, 1809–1879), a master of Hebrew grammar and biblical commentator, understood the real temple to be within oneself. In his *Remazei ha-Mishkan* ('Hints of the Sanctuary'), while discussing the biblical command, "And you shall make a sanctuary for Me that I may dwell among them,"<sup>4</sup> he explains that one has to build a *mikdash* inside oneself for the presence of God.

See also: **maṣjid, al-maṣjid al-aqṣá.**

1. *Isaiah* 56:7, *KB*.
2. *Matthew* 21:12.
3. *1 Kings* 5:1–8:66.
4. *Exodus* 25:8.

**bhāṇḍāra** (S/H), **bhāṇḍārā** (Pu) *Lit.* storehouse, treasury, repository; library; a feast given particularly for yogis, *sannyāsīs* and holy men, which is believed to earn spiritual merit for the hosts; a feast given to invoke divine favour for some private or public cause; in modern Sikh usage, a feast held under

religious auspices, open to everyone, at which free food is distributed, perhaps to celebrate some particular occasion such as the birthday or the passing of a saint or holy man.

Guru Amardās and Guru Rāmdās use the term with its original meaning. Here, the Name (*Nām*) of God (*Hari*) is the divine Word or creative power:

The Name (*Nām*) of *Hari* is wealth, stainless and endless:  
the *guru* has filled all his treasury (*bhāṇḍārā*) with it.

*Guru Amardās, Ādi Granth 664*

Within this cave (of the body),  
there is an inexhaustible treasure (*bhāṇḍārā*).  
Within this cave, the invisible and infinite Lord abides.

*Guru Rāmdās, Ādi Granth 124, AGK*

**bhog(a)** (S/H/Pu) *Lit.* enjoyment, pleasure, especially sensory; ‘enjoyment’ in the sense of reaping the fruits of one’s actions, even if negative, as in *bhog jūnī* (birth of enjoyment), a birth in the lower species where the fruit of past *karma* as a human being is ‘enjoyed’; also, a meal, a feast, as in *bhog lagānā*, food offered to a deity or idol especially at the closing of a ceremony, and *bhog āratī*, worship performed after such a ceremony.

In the past, such feasts were held in celebration of victory in war. Nowadays, the occasion may be the death anniversary of certain ancestors, a Hindu thread ceremony, the fulfilment of certain vows such as fasting or self-denial of particular things that one otherwise enjoys, completion of the reading of sacred books for a certain number of times or days, the performance of domestic rites or rituals, circumambulating the idol or shrine of a deity a particular number of times for a particular number of days, feeding the poor, *etc.* The purpose of such ceremonies and subsequent feasts is generally to heal a family member, to promote career advancement, to improve the quality of one’s life in various ways, to express gratitude for receiving divine support, and so on.

A *brahm bhog* is the ceremonial feeding of *brāhmaṇs*, which is considered meritorious in traditional Hinduism. The tradition evolved in more ancient times so that people could benefit from the company of *ṛishis* by listening to their discourses and so on.

A *bhoga* is also the name of a ceremony for the recently deceased, which traditionally ends with an offering of food made through a deity to the departed in the expectation that it will reach and be enjoyed by him or her.

See also: **bhoga** (►4).



**bhūmi-sparsha-mudrā** (S) *Lit.* touching (*sparsha*) the earth (*bhūmi*) gesture (*mudrā*); earth-witness *mudrā*; one of the characteristic hand gestures used in representations of the Buddha, in which he is seated in the lotus position (*padmāsana*) with his right hand extended, resting on his right knee with the fingers touching the earth. The left hand is placed, palm upwards, in his lap, a *mudrā* known as *dhyāna-mudrā* (contemplation gesture). The *bhūmi-sparsha-mudrā* is also found in representations of other *buddhas* and deities, especially as a gesture of immovability associated with Akshobhya, the Immovable One, who is one of the celestial or *dhyāni buddhas*.

According to tradition, the Buddha was attacked by *Māra*, the Evil One, shortly before attaining enlightenment beneath the *bodhi* tree. He was assailed by *Māra*'s army of demons, tempted by all the riches and pleasures of the world, offered unlimited power, and enticed by the wiles of *Māra*'s three beautiful and seductive daughters. The Buddha, however, remained unmoved, as firm and imperturbable as a rock. Having failed in these attempts, *Māra* then tried to challenge the Buddha's right to sit beneath the *bodhi* tree in quest of enlightenment. The Buddha responded that he had earned the right in past lives by practising the perfections (*pāramitās*), by acts of giving and generosity (*dāna*), and by performing good and meritorious deeds. *Māra* replied that he too had performed many meritorious deeds and that he had a large army of demons to prove it. At this, the Buddha pointed to the earth using the *bhūmi-sparsha-mudrā*, and called upon the earth goddess, *Sthāvarā* ('Steadfast'), as a witness. As a sign of her affirmation, *Sthāvarā* made the earth shake, which caused *Māra* and his demon army to withdraw in defeat.

In another version of the story, prevalent in Thailand, Laos and Southeast Asia, the earth goddess, *Nang Thorani*, emerges from the ground in the form of a beautiful woman, and wrings the water from her long, black, wet hair. The water represents all the water that the Buddha had offered as libations in previous lifetimes. Turning into a torrent, it drowns *Māra* and his army of demons.

**bindu** (S), **bindī** (H/Pu) *Lit.* dot, spot, drop, point, circle, sphere; particle, seed, germ, nucleus; essence, source, meaning; a small, circular cosmetic spot or religious mark, placed on the forehead by married Hindu women, usually red in colour; the woman's version of the *tilak* placed on the forehead by men. Traditionally, a *bindī* signifies that a woman is married, and it is not usually worn by widows. The mark may have originally signified the third eye and symbolized inner wisdom, but is now applied only as a cosmetic.

*Bindu* appears as a term in Sanskrit texts, especially those of a yogic and tantric nature,<sup>1</sup> where it has a spectrum of metaphorical meanings mostly centred on the concept of essence, source, or seed. Thus, for example, the highest source or essence is called the *tejobindu* (source of light), which is the divine source of everything and thus the highest focus of meditation:

The highest meditation (*paramadhyāna*) should be upon the *tejobindu* (source of light), which is all-surpassing, dwelling in the heart. . . . That alone should be the meditation (*dhyāna*) of the *munis*, indeed of all men.

*Tejobindu Upanishad 1:1–2; cf. TMU p.61*

The various *chakras* or centres of subtle life energy (*prāṇa*), as well as higher supraphysical centres, are also referred to as *bindus*. The *Varāha Upanishad* describes how the aspiring yogi should find a calm and secluded place, far away from the dwelling of other human beings. There he should begin the practices of *haṭha* and *rāja yoga*, exploring the currents (*nāḍīs*) of subtle life energy (*prāṇa*) and controlling his mind:

In this way, the wise adept, understanding the course of the *nāḍīs* and the passage of *prāṇa*, his neck, head and body erect and his mouth closed, remaining motionless, his mind well-controlled, should see with his (inner) eyes, at the root of the nose, in the middle of his heart and in the middle of the *bindu* (i.e. *sahasrāra*, the thousand-petalled lotus), the *turīyaka* (fourth state, transcendental source of all below), from which nectar streams forth.<sup>2</sup>

*Varāha Upanishad 1:31–33; cf. YU p.438*

The *bindu* of a word is its sense or meaning, as contrasted with the actual letters comprising the word or the sound it makes when spoken. The names of five of the *Upanishads* include the term, such as the *Nādabindu Upanishad*. Here, *Nādabindu* refers to the primal or seed Sound (*Nāda*), out of which all creation comes into being:

Prostrations to You, O Lord,  
essence of the primordial Sound (*Nādabindu*)  
and the primal Point (*Kalā*).

*Aruṇagirināthar, Nādabindu-kalādī namo; cf. in SSI3 pp.46–47*

There are also the *Brahmabindu* (‘Essence of *Brahm*’), the *Amṛitabindu* (‘Drop of Nectar’), the *Dhyānabindu* (‘Essence of Contemplation’), and the *Tejobindu* (‘Essence of Light’) *Upanishads*.

In places, *bindu* simply refers to some thing, or entity or energy of a subtle nature, all of which have their origin in the Sound of *Brahman*:

The mind – which along with *prāṇa* (*vāyu*) has its karmic impressions destroyed by constant concentration upon *Nāda* (Sound) – is absorbed in the unstained One. There is no doubt of it. Many myriads of *nādas*

and many more *bindus* (centres, nuclei) become absorbed in the sound of *Brahmapraṇava*.

*Nāda Upanishad* 49–51; cf. *TMU* p.197

*Bindu* is also used in descriptions of the inner light, seen as the soul ascends:

At first appears a sign like that of a star; then gradually appear a dazzling diamond; then the realm (*maṇḍala*) of the full moon; then the realm of the effulgence of the nine gems; then the realm of the mid-day sun; then the realm of the flame; all these are seen one after the other. . . . Then the effulgence of crystal, of smoke, of a circle (*bindu*), of sound (*nāda*), of a point (*kalā*), of a star, firefly, lamp, eye, gold, the nine gems, and so on; all these are seen.

*Maṇḍala-brāhmaṇa Upanishad* 2:1–2; cf. *TMU* p.188, in *PU* p.722

In tantric and yogic texts, the *bindu* also refers to ‘drops’ of subtle energy present in various parts of the body, such as the heart or the forehead, and identified at the physical level with semen. This subtle energy can be moved around by means of tantric or yogic meditation, generating a state of bliss.

See also: **tilak**.

1. E.g. *Yogakuṇḍalī Upanishad*, *Dhyāna Upanishad*, *Maṇḍala-brāhmaṇa Upanishad*, *Yogachūḍāmaṇi Upanishad*, *Yogatattva Upanishad*, *Yogashikhā Upanishad*.
2. Cf. *Darshana Upanishad* 5:2–6, *YU* pp.135–36; *Varāha Upanishad* 5:31–33, *TMU* p.181.

**bintī** (H), **benatī** (H/Pu), **bentī** (Pu) See **vinati**.

**blood and flesh of Christ** See **Eucharist**.

**brit**, **bris**, **brit millah** (He) *Lit.* covenant, contract (*brit*); a binding agreement; the covenant of circumcision (*millah*).

According to the various biblical texts, two principal covenants were made between God and the early Israelites, though there were other minor ones as well. In the ancient world, a covenant was a common way of marking an agreement, like a contract.

The covenants between God and the Israelites are the only known instances from biblical times in which God is said to have entered into an agreement with an entire people. The notion implies a special relationship, in which God assumed an obligation to the Israelites, and they to Him. It speaks of the essential Jewish belief that God selected or chose the people of Israel for His special consideration – a consideration that involves their fulfilment of certain moral and spiritual requirements. A covenant is more than a legal agreement; it betokens a relationship, and the covenant with the Israelites is viewed as a covenant of love. It is like a marriage contract, in which the love is expressed by the duties and responsibilities of both sides. Consequently, although in the Bible the covenant has a mainly theological and historical significance, it also carries additional spiritual meaning worthy of exploration.

### ***The Covenant with Abraham***

The patriarch Abraham, who first appears in *Genesis*, is regarded as the spiritual father of the Jews because he rejected idol worship and chose to worship *Yahweh*, the one God. The Bible introduces him with an account of his early life and his journeys, at God's command, from Mesopotamia, the "land of his fathers", to the land of Canaan.<sup>1</sup> It tells of Abraham's devotion to *Yahweh* and of *Yahweh's* covenant with him.

According to the biblical story, God had a very loving relationship with Abram (Abraham's name prior to his circumcision). When Abram was ninety-nine years of age, God appeared to him and said: "I am God Almighty; walk before Me, and be wholehearted (pure, whole)."<sup>2</sup> When God commanded Abram to become pure, Abram fell on his face; God continued speaking to him and told him of the covenant (*brit*) He was establishing between them.

The covenant is a promise of mutual faithfulness. It is a pledge between lovers, one divine and one human. Abraham agrees that he will worship and devote himself to the one Lord. In exchange, God promises His unceasing love and care for Abraham and his descendants – that a great and mighty people will issue from him, to whom He will bequeath a land "flowing with milk and honey"<sup>3</sup> – a land that would later be referred to as the "promised" land<sup>4</sup> – provided that they continue to be faithful to Him. The covenant is to be sealed with the circumcision (*millah*) of male children issuing from Abraham and his lineage<sup>5</sup> – "It shall be a token of the covenant (*brit*) betwixt Me and you."<sup>6</sup> The covenant is known as the *brit millah* (covenant of circumcision).

Some rabbis viewed physical circumcision as essential for experiencing the vision of God. The first appearance of this idea is probably in *Genesis Rabbah*,<sup>7</sup> a *midrash* (commentary) on the book of *Genesis*. Existing in more or less its present form by the fifth century (CE), the unknown writer argues the case for circumcision, probably to counter the Christian belief that circumcision is unnecessary.<sup>8</sup> In a characteristic example of rabbinic exegesis, the author quotes a verse from the *Book of Job* out of its original context and

with some distortion of the meaning, linking it to the observation in *Genesis*, “The Lord appeared to him (Abraham).”<sup>9</sup> Based on the account of God’s command to Abraham to circumcise himself and Ishmael,<sup>10</sup> the writer goes on to surmise Abraham’s response:

It is written, “After my skin has been peeled off, then in my flesh I shall see God.”<sup>11</sup> Abraham said, “After I circumcised myself many converts came to cleave to this sign. ‘Then in my flesh I shall see God,’ for had I not done this (*i.e.* performed the act of circumcision), on what account would the Holy One, blessed be He, have appeared to me?”

*Midrash Genesis Rabbah* 48:1, 9, GRT1 pp.479, 485; cf. in CVTW p.192

Although Abraham had also had visions of God before his circumcision,<sup>12</sup> the circumcision is deemed to have made it possible for him to see God more clearly.

In another rabbinic interpretation, physical circumcision is viewed as a ritual representing the divine imprinting of God on the human body, like a seal or inscription. The shape of the cut is intended to mimic the shape of the Hebrew letter *yod*, which is the last letter of the name of God ‘*Shaddai*’. In the Bible, the circumcision is referred to as an ‘*ot*’, which in Hebrew means both ‘sign’ and ‘letter’.<sup>13</sup> Thus the rabbis interpreted the circumcision as a divine stamp or mark.<sup>14</sup> This physical marking with the symbol of the divine name was also believed to bestow protection from misfortune and, ultimately, from hell.<sup>15</sup>

The rabbis emphasize that the circumcision was a *mizvah*, a holy commandment from God, and that it was for obeying this commandment that Abraham merited the vision of God. The circumcision, as the covenant, is an essential aspect of the link between man and God. “Through circumcision, then, one merits to stand in the presence of God, or, to put it differently, the appearance of God is itself the reward for the prior act of fulfilling the divine decree.”<sup>16</sup> In a study of the various symbolic and literal meanings of the circumcision, Elliot Wolfson notes that *Numbers Rabbah*, a twelfth-century *midrash*, presents an even deeper correlation between circumcision and the vision of God. It regards circumcision as something that actually changes the spiritual purity of the individual and is essential for experiencing a vision of God.<sup>17</sup>

Although accepted literally, metaphorical uses and interpretations of circumcision are not uncommon, and date from an early time. In advice later echoed in *Jeremiah*,<sup>18</sup> *Deuteronomy* counsels:

Circumcise (*hi-mol*) therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiffnecked.

*Deuteronomy* 10:16, KJV

In other places, too, circumcision is used as a metaphor for the process of removing the dross, the barrier separating the soul from the Divine. Philo Judaeus, a first-century Greek-speaking Jewish philosopher of Alexandria in Egypt, links circumcision to the excision or removal of sexual desire. For Philo, “the flesh of the foreskin (symbolizes) those sense pleasures and impulses which afterwards come to the body.”<sup>19</sup> Philo therefore writes of

the excision of pleasures that delude the mind. For since among all the delights that pleasure can afford, the association of man and woman is deemed the most exquisite, the lawgivers thought good to dock the organ which ministers to such intercourse, thus making circumcision a figurative representation of the excision of excessive and superfluous pleasure – not only of that one pleasure, but of all the other pleasures signified by that one, which is the most imperious of all.

*Philo, Special Laws 1:2; cf. PCW7 pp.104–5, WPJ3 pp.176–77*

Referring to the *Septuagint* (Greek) translation of *Deuteronomy*, Philo adds more specifically that circumcision represents elimination of the male mind and ego,

whose superfluous growths it is necessary to cut off and throw away in order that it may become pure and naked of every evil and passion, and become a priest of God. Now this is what He indicated by the second circumcision, stating in the Law that “you shall circumcise your hardness of heart,”<sup>20</sup> which means your hard and rebellious and refractory thoughts, and by cutting off and removing arrogance, you shall make the sovereign part (the soul) free and unbound. . . .

It (circumcision) indicates the cutting off not only of excessive desires, but also of arrogance and great evil and habits such as these. And arrogance, as the saying of the ancients goes, cuts off and impedes (spiritual) progress, for one who thinks (well of himself) does not admit (the possibility) of (his own) betterment.

*Philo Judaeus, Questions and Answers on Genesis 3:46, 48; cf. QAGP pp.241, 246*

Taking their cue from the *Torah*, the mystically minded rabbis of the medieval *Zohar*, the primary text of the Kabbalah, interpreted the circumcision in various ways, both literal and symbolic. Union of the devotee with the Divine, for instance, was understood esoterically through the symbolism of circumcision and sexual union:

Beholding the face of the *Shekhinah* (personification of the divine presence) becomes in the *Zohar*<sup>21</sup> an actual embrace or penetration of the mystic into the divine feminine. . . . Circumcision is thus an act

of opening that not only ushers the circumcised into the covenantal community of God, but also places the individual into an immediate – visual – relationship to the Divine.

Elliot Wolfson, "Circumcision, Vision of God,  
and Textual Interpretation," CVTW p.190

The *Zohar* also suggests that circumcision represents an 'opening' of the understanding through the process of exegesis, by which deeper mystical meaning is found in the *Torah*. Elliot Wolfson writes:

The opening of circumcision, in the final analysis, is transformed in the *Zohar* into a symbol for the task of exegesis.<sup>22</sup> ... Through exegesis, that which was concealed, hidden, closed – in a word, esoteric – becomes opened, disclosed, manifest – in a word, exoteric. The uncovering of the phallus is conceptually and structurally parallel to the disclosure of the text.

Elliot Wolfson, "Circumcision, Vision of God,  
and Textual Interpretation," CVTW pp.191–92

*Brit millah* is usually interpreted to mean the covenant of physical circumcision. However, there is a wordplay in the Hebrew between two meanings of the word *millah*, which provides another possible understanding of the covenant. *Millah* means 'word' as well as 'circumcision'. Although the two words are different in modern Hebrew, they are both derived from a common primitive root. Hence, the command in the original Hebrew, "*hi-mol lakhem kal zakhar*,"<sup>23</sup> which is generally translated as 'circumcise (*hi-mol*) every male (*zakhar*),' can also mean "'mark' or 'name' every male." *Hi-mol* is the imperative form of the root *millah*. Moreover, while *zakhar* means 'male' it can also mean 'remembrance'.<sup>24</sup> *Genesis* also relates in three places that Abraham called upon God's 'Name',<sup>25</sup> and taking the meaning of *brit millah* in the second sense, it may be that Abraham is being commanded always to remember the divine Name or Word.

This remembrance is an integral aspect of meditation on the divine Name, and while the *Zohar* understands the name of God (*YHWH*) literally, it is possible, taking both meanings of the wordplay together, that circumcision may refer not only to a physical procedure, but also metaphorically to spiritual initiation into the practice of the divine Name, through which the roots of passion and attachment to the world are cut.<sup>26</sup>

This alternative etymology is the basis of another interpretation of circumcision found in the *Zohar* – that the real and permanent covenant between man and God is through attachment to the Name of God. This dual meaning is emphasized, when it says that originally Abram could only reach a certain level of communion with God, but after he was circumcised

he became attached to the Name of God, following which God's Word was with him at all times:

See now, before a man is circumcised he is not attached to the Name of God, but when he is circumcised he enters into the Name and is attached to it. Abram, it is true, was attached to the Name before he was circumcised, but not in the proper manner, but only through God's extreme love for him; subsequently He commanded him to circumcise himself, and then he was vouchsafed the covenant which links all the supernal levels, a covenant of union which links the whole together so that every part is intertwined. Hence, till Abram was circumcised, God's Word was with him only in a vision.

*Zohar 1:89a; cf. ZSS1 p.295*

Before Abraham's initiation into the Name, God would appear to him from time to time, but his communion with God was beyond his control. After God had created the covenant (*i.e.* united him with the Name), Abraham became whole, and he experienced God's Word or presence with him at all times. The *Zohar* also finds significance in Abram's change of name to Abraham:

We have further learnt: "The reason why the name Abraham occurs for the first time in connection with the circumcision is that when he was circumcised he became associated with the letter *He*, and the *Shekhinah* rested on him."

*Zohar 1:93a, ZSS1 p.305*

At the time of his circumcision, Abram's name was changed to Abraham by the addition of the Hebrew letter *He*. *He* is also a shortened form of *Yahweh* and is used to designate God. So the *Zohar* argues that the addition of *He* to Abram signifies the added level of spirituality, *i.e.* awareness of the *Shekhinah*, the divine indwelling presence.

The *Zohar* maintains that Abraham's circumcision pertains to spiritual initiation into the practice of the Holy Name. In a logically convoluted passage in keeping with its normal style and rabbinic exegesis in general, the *Zohar* enlists the aid of further wordplay on biblical passages taken out of context in order to 'prove' this otherwise simple point:

When at length the covenant (*brit*) existed in Abraham through the circumcision, then . . . the word of the Lord came to him openly: hence it is written, "And the Lord appeared unto him."<sup>27</sup> Said Rabbi Eleazar: "Until Abraham was circumcised, God did not speak with him save from a lower level. . . . But after he had been circumcised, . . . 'the voice of the turtledove was heard in the land,'<sup>28</sup> to wit, the Voice which issues



from the innermost recess – this Voice was now heard, and shaped the spoken words and gave them their perfect form. This is implied in the words here used, ‘and the Lord appeared to him.’

“Already, before Abraham had been circumcised, we are told that ‘the Lord appeared unto Abram (and said unto him),’<sup>29</sup> and if the word ‘him’ in this sentence refers to Abraham, we may well ask, what advance had he made (in prophecy) by being circumcised? The answer is that the word ‘him’ here has an inner meaning: it refers to the level which now spoke with him. Now for the first time ‘the Lord appeared’ at that level; that is to say, the Voice was revealed, and associated itself with the divine Speech (*Dibbur*) in conversing with him.

“Similarly in the words, ‘As he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day,’<sup>30</sup> the word ‘he’ has an inner meaning, indicating that all the levels rested on this lower level after Abraham had been circumcised. (To the writers of the *Zohar*, it implied that ‘he’ included all the levels, including the highest divine level.)

“Thus the words, ‘And the Lord appeared unto him’ contain a mystic allusion to that audible Voice that is united to Speech, and manifests itself therein (even as a vision). ‘As he sat in the tent door’ refers to the supernal world that was at hand to illumine him...”

“And there appeared unto him” – Rabbi Abba said: “Before Abraham was circumcised he was, as it were, covered over, but as soon as he was circumcised he became completely exposed to the influence of the *Shekhinah*, which thereupon rested on him in full and perfect measure.”

*Zohar* 1:97b–98b; cf. *ZSS* pp.322–23

Once Abraham was initiated, he heard the Speech and Voice or Word of God. Sitting at the “tent door” means that spiritually his inner being was on the threshold of the supernal worlds, where the inner Voice or Speech of God resounds and can be heard. Metaphorically, the circumcision cut away the coverings that had prevented him from receiving the spiritual influence of the *Shekhinah*. Symbolically, his material coverings had been removed. Or so it was understood according to the interpretation of the *Zohar*.

### ***The Covenant with Moses and the Children of Israel***

After the time of Abraham, according to the story told in *Genesis* and *Exodus*, the unfortunate Israelites, following a series of misadventures, find themselves as slaves in Egypt.<sup>31</sup> Eventually, God appears to Moses and calls upon him to lead the Israelites, in order to fulfil His prior covenant with them. At that point, however, they are unready to accept Moses’ lead because they are so deeply demoralized by their slavery:

And God spoke to Moses, and said to him, “I am the Lord (*Yahweh*): and I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob, by the name of ‘God Almighty (*El Shaddai*)’; but I was not known to them by my name ‘the Lord (*Yahweh*)’. And I have also established my covenant (*brit*) with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land in which they had dwelt as foreigners.

“And I have also heard the groaning of the people of Israel, whom the Egyptians keep in slavery; and I have remembered My covenant (*brit*). Therefore, say to the people of Israel, I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will free you from their slavery, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm, and with great judgments; and I will take you to Me for a people, and I will be to you a God; and you shall know that I am the Lord your God, who brings you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. And I will bring you in to the land, concerning which I swore to give it to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob; and I will give it to you for a heritage; I am the Lord.”

And Moses spoke so to the people of Israel; but they listened not to Moses because of their anguished spirit and because of the cruel slavery.

*Exodus 6:2–9; cf. JB, JCL*

In time, however, the people do listen. With divine assistance, they escape and Moses subsequently leads them for forty years through what is now known as the Sinai peninsula. During their wanderings, they reach Mount Sinai, where God reveals the Ten Commandments and, according to tradition, the entire *Torah*. The bestowal of the Ten Commandments symbolizes a renewal of God’s covenant with Abraham which had been made six hundred years earlier. God again promises to lead the people into the “promised” land and the Israelites agree give up other forms of worship and worship Him alone. Spiritually, the commandments represent a basic teaching on how to live a spiritual life in this world. Interpreted allegorically, as many later interpreters have done, the story symbolizes the reunion of God and man through love. God leads the soul from the slavery of materiality to the “promised” land of eternity, the true nature and home of the soul, a state of consciousness in which the soul is always aware of the divine presence. But during this quest, much time is spent in the wilderness of this world.

As the story is told in *Exodus*, Moses ascends the mountain at God’s command, and God reveals Himself to Moses in intense spiritual light and sound.<sup>32</sup> Moses tries to bring this revelation to the children of Israel in the form of the Ten Commandments inscribed on two stone tablets, but on his descent from the mountain, he finds that they have started worshipping an idol in the form of a golden calf, and are not ready to accept the covenant. In

frustration, Moses throws the two tablets to the ground, where they break. Following this, he ascends mount Sinai once again and returns with a second set of tablets. Whether any symbolic meaning is intended by these the two ascents of Mount Sinai and the other details of the story is uncertain, but the second time God offers the covenant to Moses on Mount Sinai, the people are willing to accept it:

And Moses went up to God, and the Lord called to him from the mountain, saying, “Thus shall you say to the house of Jacob and tell the people of Israel; ‘You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I carried you on eagles’ wings, and brought you to Myself. Now therefore, if you will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant (*brit*), then you shall be My own treasure among all peoples; for all the earth is mine; and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation.’ These are the words which you shall speak to the people of Israel.”

And Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before them all these words which the Lord commanded him. And all the people answered together, and said, “All that the Lord has spoken we will do.” And Moses reported the words of the people to the Lord.

*Exodus 19:3–8, JCL*

The Bible goes on to recount the various rules and moral requirements of the covenant, which are repeated in the book of *Deuteronomy*<sup>33</sup> just before the account of Moses’ death and the entry of the Israelites into the “promised” land.

Moses speaks to them on behalf of God and admonishes them, for he knows that they will not adhere to the covenant and that they will suffer punishment before the grace of the ultimate divine forgiveness is showered upon them. In an instance of beautiful biblical poetry, Moses recounts all the blessings God has bestowed upon them; and he praises God for caring for them, despite their ingratitude and disobedience – something that sounds very much like the perennial human condition:

Give ear, O heavens, and I will speak,  
and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth.  
My doctrine shall drop as the rain,  
my speech shall distil as the dew,  
as light rain upon the tender herb,  
and as showers upon grass –

Because I will proclaim the name of the Lord:  
ascribe greatness to our God.

He is the Rock, His work is perfect, for all His ways are just:  
 a God of truth and without iniquity, upright and just is He.  
 Not His the corruption – it is his children who are blemished:  
 they are a perverse and crooked generation.  
 Do you thus requite the Lord, O foolish and unwise people?  
 Is He not your father who has bought you?  
 Has He not made you, and established you? ...

When the Most High parcelled out the nations,  
 when he dispersed all mankind,  
 He laid down the boundaries of every people  
 according to the number of the sons of God;  
 But the Lord's share was His own people,  
 Jacob was His allotted portion.

He found him in a desert land,  
 and in the howling desert of the wilderness;  
 He led him about, He instructed him,  
 He kept him as the apple of His eye.  
 As an eagle stirs up its nest, flutters over its young,  
 spreads out its wings, takes them, bears them on its pinions –  
 So the Lord alone did lead him,  
 and there was no strange god with him.  
 He made him ride on the high places of the earth,  
 and he ate the produce of the fields;  
 And He made him suck honey out of rock,  
 and oil out of flinty stone.

*Deuteronomy 32:1–6, 8–13; cf. JB, JCL, NEB*

The terms of the covenant given to Moses mean that the people have to follow a moral way of life and be faithful to the worship of the one God – as the poet says: “the Lord alone did lead him (Jacob), and there was no strange god with him.” Spiritually, their acceptance of the covenant means that they agreed to live according to a high moral standard.

### ***The Covenant According to the Prophets***

Referring to the stories of Abraham and Moses, later biblical prophets also spoke of the covenant with God. The book of *Isaiah* says that the soul that hears God's Word will live, adding that this is God's everlasting covenant. Mystically, the implication is that listening to the divine Word will bring ‘life’ – *i.e.* immortality. This is the true covenant with God that remains forever with the soul:

Incline your ear, and come to Me:  
 hear, and your soul shall live;  
 And I will make an everlasting covenant (*brit*) with you,  
 even the sure loving promises of David.

*Isaiah 55:3, JCL*

There are many references in the prophetic books to God's renewal of the covenant through the establishment of the monarchy of King David. This has precipitated an ongoing debate among scholars as to whether these allusions, in which God promises eternal leadership of Israel to a king-messiah from David's lineage, have been added to the text at a later date by those wishing to give credence to the monarchy and lineage of King David. The history of the texts is uncertain, but what does seem clear is that the subsequent sufferings of the Israelites and their eventual exile from the land of Canaan (later divided into the kingdoms of Israel and Judah), were attributed to their unfaithfulness to the terms of the covenant: they neglected their worship of the one God *Yahweh* at the shrine in Jerusalem; they continued to worship the gods of the Canaanite pantheon; and they debased themselves with various immoral practices. The prophetic books of *Isaiah*, *Jeremiah*, *Hosea* and others continually remind the people of the need to adhere to the covenant, but in vain.

The writer dubbed by scholars as the Second Isaiah, and who referred to himself as '*eved Yahweh* (the servant of God), says that he was selected by God and invested with the holy spirit in order to bring awareness of truth, justice and the divine presence to humanity – to remind them of the spiritual and moral content of the covenant. He writes as an intermediary between God and man, in the same way as Moses, Joshua, and other prophets before him. In one of his poems, it is *Yahweh* Himself who declares that the prophet is filled with the divine spirit (*ruah*), and that he himself has been sent as the covenant for the people, the fulfilment of the divine promise of redemption, as a light to the nations, to bring sight to the spiritually blind and freedom to those who sit in the prison of spiritual darkness. By his very life, he is a reminder of the promise of divine grace, and the need for the people to follow a spiritual way of life in the worship of God. According to the Second Isaiah, *Yahweh* says:

"Here is my servant ('*eved*) whom I uphold,  
 my chosen one in whom my soul delights.  
 I have endowed him with my spirit (*ruah*),  
 that he may bring true justice to the nations.

"He does not cry out or shout aloud,  
 or make his voice heard in the streets.

He does not break the crushed reed,  
nor quench the wavering flame.

“Faithfully he brings true justice;  
He will neither waver, nor be crushed  
until true justice is established on earth,  
for the islands are awaiting his teaching.”

Thus says God, *Yahweh*,  
He who created the heavens and spread them out,  
who gave shape to the earth and what comes from it,  
who gave breath to its people  
and life (spirit) to the creatures that move in it:

“I, the Lord, have called you to serve the cause of right;  
I have taken you by the hand and formed you;  
I have appointed you as a covenant (*brit*) of the people  
and light of the nations,  
to open the eyes of the blind,  
to free captives from prison,  
and those who live in darkness from the dungeon.

“I am the Lord: that is My name.  
My glory I will not give to another,  
neither My praise to idols.”

*Isaiah 42:1–8; cf. JB*

From this well-known passage, it is clear that the writer understands the biblical covenant to refer to more than a promise of loyalty through ritual and cultic worship, adherence to universal lofty moral and ethical requirements, and worship of the one Lord and His Holy Name. It also refers to the divine promise of a prophet or teacher who will bring spiritual insight and understanding to those who live in spiritual darkness and bondage.

See also: **Covenant** (3.1).

1. *Genesis* 11:31, 12:1–5, 15:7.
2. *Genesis* 17:1; cf. *JPSI*.
3. *Exodus* 3:8, 17, 13:5, 33:3.
4. *Exodus* 12:25.
5. *Genesis* 17:1–27.
6. *Genesis* 17:11, *KJV*.

7. See Elliot Wolfson, "Circumcision, Vision of God, and Textual Interpretation," *CVTW* p.192.
8. Malka Simkovitch, "Interpretations of Abraham's Circumcision in Early Christianity and Genesis Rabbah," in *NVJC* pp.250, 261–62, *passim*.
9. *Genesis* 18:1.
10. *Genesis* 17:23–27.
11. *Job* 19:26.
12. *Genesis* 12:7, 17:1.
13. *Genesis* 17:11.
14. See Elliot Wolfson, "Circumcision, Vision of God, and Textual Interpretation," *CVTW* p.191.
15. See Elliot Wolfson, "Circumcision and the Divine Name," *CDNW*, pp.80, 85.
16. Elliot Wolfson, "Circumcision, Vision of God, and Textual Interpretation," *CVTW* p.193.
17. *Midrash Numbers Rabbah* 12:10, *NRMP*.
18. *Jeremiah* 4:4.
19. Philo Judaeus, *Questions and Answers on Genesis* 3:52, *QAGP* p.253.
20. *Deuteronomy* 10:16, *LXX*.
21. *Passim*; see also Daniel Matt, *Zohar: Annotated and Explained*, *ZAEM* pp. xiii, xxvii.
22. *Zohar* 1:98b.
23. *Genesis* 17:10.
24. See e.g. David Ariel, *The Mystic Quest*, *MQ* p.107; Miriam Bokser Caravella, *The Holy Name*, *HNMJ* p.3 and *Mystic Heart of Judaism*, *MHJM* pp.30–33.
25. *Genesis* 12:8, 13:4, 21:33.
26. Original suggestion by Miriam Bokser Caravella.
27. *Genesis* 12:7, 17:1, 18:1.
28. *Song of Songs* 2:12.
29. *Genesis* 17:1.
30. *Genesis* 18:1.
31. *Exodus* 1:1–14.
32. *Exodus* 19:16–19.
33. *Deuteronomy* 5:1–21, 6:1–25.

**buddharūpa** (S/Pa) *Lit.* form (*rūpa*) of the Buddha; any iconographic representation of the historical Buddha or one of the celestial *buddhas* in a materially manifested body, be it a statue, a sculpture or a painting, used ostensibly for devotion, but in many instances also for display.

*Bodhisattvas* and other figures from Buddhist legend and mythology are also depicted in a similar manner. The rotund, pot-bellied and jovial

laughing *buddha* of Japanese and Chinese Buddhism – who symbolizes all-encompassing goodwill and love, and is often seen at the entrance to monasteries, temples, and many businesses – is not in fact a representation of the historical Buddha. It is said to be based upon the semi-historical, sixth-century monk Hotei (C. Bùdài), nicknamed the Laughing Buddha (C. Xiào Fó).

A vast number of statues of the Buddha are found throughout the Buddhist world in temples, monasteries, homes, businesses, and elsewhere. They are sold in shops, in front of which large numbers of variously sized *buddha* statues may line the pavement, for anyone to own who can pay the price. Made of various materials and differing in size and representation, they portray his many virtues and excellent qualities. He is depicted standing, sitting or reclining, and usually making symbolic hand gestures (*mudrās*). Certain physical characteristics are generally in evidence. His body is well-proportioned; he has a protuberance (*ushnīsha*) on the top of the head, symbolizing wisdom; he has long earlobes, indicating his youth as a wealthy prince who wore heavy, jewelled earrings; his fingers and toes, depending on the period and place of their making, are either well-proportioned or of almost the same length; he has broad shoulders and a long, aquiline nose; and he has a jewel or some other mark between his two eyes, representing the divine eye that sees all things. In the *Theravāda* tradition, the upper part of his body is unclad, but in Chinese and Japanese images, he is normally wearing a robe, since it is regarded as inappropriate to show bare upper arms.

Some statues of the Buddha are spectacular works of art and engineering, representing the fervent devotion of the large number of Buddhist sculptors who toiled to produce these wonders. The Giant Buddha of Leshan in Sichuan, western China, depicting the *bodhisattva* Maitreya, is thought to be the largest stone-carved *buddha* in the world. Built during the *Táng* dynasty and carved out of a cliff face, it stands seventy-one metres high, and took from 713 to 803 CE to complete.

In Japan, the bronze-cast Great Buddha of Kakamura depicts Amida Buddha. It stands thirteen metres high and weighs around ninety-three tons.

In the Wat Pho temple in Bangkok, a huge, gold-plated, reclining Buddha depicting the ultimate liberation and passing away of the Buddha (his *parinirvāṇa*), is forty-five metres long and fifteen high.

The bronze-plated Ushiku Daibutsu (‘Great Buddha of Ushiku’) statue of the Buddha in Japan is one of the world’s tallest statues, standing one hundred and twenty metres high.

The Monywa statue in central Myanmar is the largest reclining-Buddha statue in the world. It is ninety metres long and is of hollow construction, permitting visitors to walk inside it from the head to the feet while viewing nine thousand one-foot-high metal images of the Buddha and his disciples, portraying various stories and events from the Buddha’s life.



The huge stone Buddha, the Kyauk Taw Gyi (‘Great Stone Royal’), carved in 1865, is also in Myanmar. It is twenty-seven feet high, weighs one hundred and eighty tons, and is carved from a single block of alabaster. According to the story, Prince Mindon, having started a rebellion against the king, was fleeing from troops when he took refuge in the village of Sagyin for the night. While there, he heard of a huge block of alabaster in the Sagyin hills, and vowed that if he ever became king, he would have it carved into a statue of the Buddha. In 1853 he became king, and twelve years later he fulfilled his promise. The statue is so big that a person can lie down in the palm of the Buddha’s upward-facing, left hand.<sup>1</sup>

Although scholars still debate whether idolatry existed in the early Vedic religion, it is agreed that it was present before the advent of Buddhism and that it arrived in Buddhism through the Mahayanists, who were most probably influenced by Hindu practices. It is estimated that the *Mahāyāna* pantheon of deities, *buddhas* and *bodhisattvas* numbers more than a thousand. The *Mahāyāna* tradition of *buddharūpas* has evolved over the years to represent not only the historical Buddha, but many celestial *buddhas* and *bodhisattvas* as well, including Amitābha, Mañjuśrī, and Avalokiteshvara. This iconographic tradition has spread throughout all Buddhist schools, including *Theravāda*, whose followers have always adhered closely to the teachings and instructions of the Buddha as represented in the earliest Pali texts.

Nevertheless, contrary to this practice, it is recorded in the Pali *suttas* that the Buddha himself discouraged the worship of his own bodily form (*rūpa*) or of any physical form. Physical bodies, he taught, are no more than one of the five impermanent elements (*skandhas*) that go into the makeup of a sentient being. What he emphasized and regarded as important was striving for enlightenment through practice of the *Dhamma*, in order to attain liberation from all the limitations imposed by material existence. In the *Vakkali Sutta*, the ailing Vakkali admits, at some length, his unworthiness to the Buddha. He also says that he has been wanting to come and see the Buddha for a long time, but physical infirmity has prevented him. At this, the Buddha says, “Enough, Vakkali. Why do you want to see this foul body? Whoever sees the *Dhamma* sees me; whoever sees me sees the *Dhamma*.” Vakkali then goes on to acknowledge that the human form of the Buddha is “impermanent”.<sup>2</sup>

See also: **stūpa**.

1. See “Burmese sculpture,” factsanddetails.com, ret. November 2015.

2. *Samyutta Nikāya* 22:87, *Vakkali Sutta*, PTSS3 pp.120–21; cf. CDBB p.939.

**Buddhist festivals** With variations from one sub-tradition to another, religious feasts, ceremonies and holidays are celebrated throughout the Buddhist world,

often in commemoration of some significant event or turning point in the Buddha's life, Buddhist history, or mythology. These include: the Buddha's birth, enlightenment (*bodhi*), and ultimate liberation at death (*parinirvāṇa*); other events in the life of the Buddha; the ordination of monks; and, in the *Mahāyāna* tradition, the birthdays of particular celestial *bodhisattvas*. In countries and communities where Buddhism exists alongside other religions and traditions, as in East Asia, festivals are often blended with the festivals of traditions such as Confucianism, Daoism and Shintō that existed prior to the arrival of Buddhism. Most Buddhist festivals fall on a full-moon day, a day traditionally regarded as auspicious in India and the East.

The major festivals are colourful pageants and joyful occasions, characterized by street processions of monks, nuns and novices, elaborate ceremonies, displays of dancing, dramatic reconstructions of past events, and so on. The laity will generally visit the local monastery or temple, taking with them offerings of food or other essential items such as robes, medicines, and books. The devout may renew their commitment to the *pañca-sīla* (Pa. five precepts), which are: not to take the life of any living being; not to steal or take what is not given; to abstain from sexual misconduct; to abstain from false or wrong speech; to abstain from intoxicants. They may listen to a *Dhamma* (Teachings, Path) talk; and they may also distribute alms or food to the poor, often with the desire to earn 'merit'. Ceremonies can include the recitation of prayers, thanksgiving to the deities, and three circumambulations of a stupa in memory of the three refuges – the Buddha, the *Dhamma*, and the *sangha* (Buddhist community). The day often ends with communal chanting and meditation.

The most well-known festivals include:

*Buddhist New Year.* In the *Theravāda* countries of Sri Lanka, Thailand, Myanmar, Kampuchea (Cambodia) and Laos, New Year celebrations last for three days, starting on the first full-moon day in April. In *Mahāyāna* countries, the celebrations begin on the first full-moon day in January. For Chinese, Koreans and Vietnamese, the New Year is celebrated in late January or early February. Each country, of course, has its own names for the solar or lunar months that relate to the Western or Gregorian calendar.

*Vesākha Pūjā* (Pa) or *Buddha Day.* Celebration of the Buddha's birth. In the *Theravāda* tradition especially (but not exclusively), the day also celebrates the Buddha's enlightenment (*nirvāṇa*) and final liberation at death (*parinirvāṇa*). *Vesākha* (H. *Vaishākh*) is the month in the Indian lunar calendar that usually corresponds to the month of May, but sometimes to April, and to June in lunar leap years. The name of the festival varies from country to country and language to language, as does the exact date. In India, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Myanmar, it is held on the full-moon day,

where it is also known as *Buddha Pūrṇimā* or *Buddha Jayantī*. *Pūrṇimā* (S/H) means ‘full moon’ and *Jayantī* (H/Nepali) means ‘birthday’. In China and East Asia except Japan, it is held on the eighth day of the fourth month of the Chinese lunar calendar. In Japan, since 1873, it has been held on April 8th of the Gregorian calendar. In Taiwan, since legislation passed in 1999, it has been commemorated on the second Sunday in May. In many Buddhist countries, Buddha Day is a public holiday.

Festivities vary from country to country and can include chanting of the three refuges and five precepts, prayers, the full-length recital of a Buddhist *sūtra*, the ritual ablution of an image of the Buddha, and so on. The devout normally dress in white; non-vegetarian food is generally avoided, and free food may be served in the temples. *Khīr* (Indian rice pudding) is often served in memory of the girl Sujāta (‘Well Born’), who placed a bowl of milk before the aspiring but emaciated Buddha at a time when he was seeking enlightenment through extreme fasting and other austerities. It is said to have been her action that led the Buddha to realize that extreme measures were not the way to enlightenment.

*Rōhatsu* (J) or *Bodhi Day*. A Japanese *Zen* commemoration of the day the Buddha passed into *parinirvāṇa* (final *nirvāṇa*); held on the eighth day of the twelfth lunar month. The day is preceded by a week-long retreat (*sesshin*) in which the monks and nuns try to emulate the resolution of the Buddha when he vowed to sit in ceaseless meditation under the *bodhi* tree until he attained enlightenment. An all-night vigil is often kept on the first and last nights of the *sesshin*, when the monks remain in meditation for the whole night and do not lie down. In some monasteries, monks do not lie down for the entire week. In recent times, the practice has been to begin the *sesshin* on the first of December and to end it on the eighth, regardless of the phase of the moon. A ceremony is held on the first and last days of the *sesshin*. In the Japanese *Tendai* school, *Rōhatsu* is called either *Shaka Jōdō-e* or just *Jōdō-e*. *Bodhi* Day is also celebrated in other *Mahāyāna* Buddhist traditions in China, Korea, and Vietnam.

*Āsālha Pūjā* (Pa) or *Dhamma Day*. Devotion or worship (*pūjā*) on the eighth lunar month (*Āsālha*), which generally falls in July/August; a world-wide *Theravāda* Buddhist festival commemorating the day of the Buddha’s first discourse following his enlightenment, the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta* (‘Discourse Setting in Motion the Wheel of *Dhamma*’), delivered in the deer park near Vārāṇasī to the five companions with whom he had practised many years of austerities, and during which he first expounded the four noble truths. While he was speaking, the five are said to have themselves attained enlightenment. The day also marks the founding of

the first *sangha* or community of Buddhist monks, which comprised the Buddha's first five disciples. In *Theravāda*, *Dhamma Day* is the *uposatha* day that falls immediately before the start of the rains retreat. As with other Buddhist festivals, celebrations include temple worship, making offerings, listening to *Dhamma* talks, and reading literature concerning the *Dhamma*. In some countries, such as Thailand (where *Dhamma Day* is known as *Asanha* or *Asarnha Bucha*), offerings of flowers rather than food are placed in the begging bowls of the monks, who subsequently offer them to images of the Buddha in their monasteries or temples.

In Sri Lanka, *Dhamma Day* is known by the Sinhalese as *Esala Perahera* ('Procession of *Esala*'). It consists of a sequence of elaborate and magnificent processions – including exotically ornamented elephants, escorted by drummers and dancers in elegant and colourful costumes – that last ten days and culminate on the full moon of the month of *Esala*. The pageant takes place in Kandy in honour of a purported tooth relic of the Buddha, preserved in the *Sri Dalada Maligawa* ('Temple of the Tooth'). A replica of the golden case in which the tooth relic is kept is carried on the back of one particular, well-trained, and exotically decorated elephant.

The festival is a combination of two earlier, but associated festivals – the *Esala* and the *Dalada*. The *Esala Perahera* originated as a prayer to the gods for abundant rains, and dates back to the third century CE. The *Dalada Perahera* has its origins in the fourth century, when the tooth relic was brought from India to Sri Lanka. Custodianship of the tooth relic was the responsibility of the reigning monarchs, who built impressive temples to house it. Over time, the custodianship became associated with the right to rule. Kandy was the seat of the last ruling dynasty of Sri Lanka, conquered by the British in 1815, after which the Buddhist priesthood were given the responsibility of caring for the relic.

*Māgha Pūjā Day, Sangha Day, Fourfold Assembly Day.* A *Theravāda* festival held on the full-moon day of the third lunar month. According to the traditional legend, at the end of the first rains retreat, held at the deer park at Sārnāth, the Buddha left and went to Rājagaha, where he was met by 1,250 enlightened disciples. These disciples had spontaneously gathered at the Veṇuvana Monastery in Rājagaha with two of the foremost disciples, Venerable Sāriputta and Venerable Moggallāna, in order to express their gratitude to their master. *Māgha Pūjā Day* commemorates this event. It is called the 'Fourfold Assembly' because of four aspects of the gathering: all of the 1,250 were *arahantas* (enlightened ones); all had been initiated by the Buddha; they had assembled without any prior arrangement; and it was the full-moon day of the month of *Megha*. *Sangha* (community) refers to a community of Buddhists, either local, countrywide, or worldwide.

*Poson* (Sinhala). A significant Sri Lankan Buddhist festival held on the full-moon day of June, celebrating the conversion to Buddhism of the Sinhalese king Devānampiya Tissa (250–210 BCE), brought about by the missionary efforts of the Venerable Mahā Mahinda, Buddhist monk and son of the great Indian emperor Ashoka (304–232 BCE) of the Maurya Dynasty.

*Avalokiteshvara's Birthday*. Commemoration and celebration of the birthday of the celestial *bodhisattva* Avalokiteshvara (S), held in China and Tibet on the full-moon day in March. Avalokiteshvara (C. Guānzìzài, T. Chenrézig) is the *bodhisattva* of compassion, and the celebrations, which consist of the usual visits to the temple, prayers and chanting to the *bodhisattvas*, etc., are intended to create a remembrance of the ideal of kindness and compassion to other living beings. The chanting ceremonies may be accompanied by the release of captive birds and animals.

*Ullambana, Yúlánpén, Fàng yàn kǒu* (C), *Urabon, Obon, Bon* (J), *Ancestor Day*. The hungry ghosts (*pretas*) festival, held on the full-moon day of the seventh lunar month as a part of the *pravāraṇā* festivities that mark the end of the rainy-season (*varsha*) retreat. Offerings of food, money and clothing are made to the monks and nuns by the Buddhist laity, on behalf of their deceased ancestors. The origins of the tradition are found in a story related in the *Ullambana Sūtra* (C. *Yúlánpén jīng*), traditionally believed to have been written in Sanskrit and translated into Chinese, but thought by modern scholars to have been an original Chinese composition, written in the style of a Sanskrit or Pali *sūtra*, and dating from the sixth century CE. First celebrated in 538 CE, during the *Táng* dynasty, special significance is attached to the festival in China. The *Ullambana* festival, as it is known in India and Tibet, seems to have originated in China.

The word *ullambana* is of uncertain origin. *Yúlánpén*, the Chinese word used in the title, makes little sense in Chinese, and it is presumed to be a transliteration of a Sanskrit word, of which several candidates have been suggested. One that is commonly seen is a derivation from *ullamb*, which means ‘to hang up’, presumably referring to the tortures of hell. A more probable derivation is from the Pali and Buddhist Sanskrit word *ullumpana*, which means ‘saving’ or ‘raising up’, which accords with the story told in the *Ullambana Sūtra*.<sup>1</sup>

According to the narrative, Mahāmaudgalyāyana (Pa. Mahā Moggallāna), an advanced disciple of the Buddha, wished to repay the debt he owed to his parents for raising him by delivering them from the realm of rebirth. Surveying the worlds of transmigration with his divine eye, he saw that his emaciated and distressed mother had been born into the realm of hungry ghosts. “Having neither food nor drink, she has wasted away to skin and bones”:

Stricken with grief, Mahāmaudgalyāyana filled a bowl with rice and approached his mother to offer it. His mother held the bowl in her left hand and took some rice with her right hand; but before the rice reached her mouth it turned into a piece of burning charcoal, and she could not eat it at all. Crying loudly in anguish, Mahāmaudgalyāyana hurriedly returned to the presence of the Buddha and related to him in detail what had happened.

The Buddha said to him, “Your mother’s evil *karma* is so deep-rooted that it is beyond your individual power (to alleviate it). Although you are filled with filial piety and your cries shake heaven and earth, even the gods of heaven and earth, evil spirits, *brāhmaṇs*, *bodhisattvas*, and the four gate guardians can do nothing about it. But she can be liberated through the divine power of the assembled monks of all the ten directions.

“Now I shall teach you a way (*dharma*) of deliverance by which to free all suffering beings from pain and distress and from the consequences of their evil *karma*.” The Buddha then said to Mahāmaudgalyāyana, “The fifteenth day of the seventh month, when the assembled monks of all the ten directions end their summer retreat, is *pravāraṇā* day. On that day, for the sake of your parents of the past seven generations and your present suffering parents, you should prepare a table with the world’s finest delicacies, together with foods of rich variety and taste, and five kinds of greens and cereals, and offer it to the assembled monks of all the ten directions. You should also offer them ladles, kettles, basins, perfumed oil, lamps, carpets, and bedding.

“On that day, all the holy assembly of monks, whether those who are practising *dhyāna samādhi* in the mountains, or who have attained the four fruits of the Way, or who are engaged in walking meditation beneath a tree, or who freely instruct *shrāvakas* and *pratyeka-buddhas* with the six supernatural powers, or who have manifested as *bhikshus* when in fact they are *bodhisattvas* at the tenth stage (*bhūmi*) – each of them replete with the pure precepts and ocean-like virtue of the holy Way – should gather in a great assembly and all of like mind receive the *pravāraṇā* food.

“If, in this manner, one makes offerings to the monks after the retreat then their present parents, their parents of the past seven generations and their six close relatives (fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, wives, and children) will be set free from the suffering of the three evil realms of rebirth (hell, hungry ghosts, and animals), and in due course they will be liberated. Food and clothing will also appear spontaneously before them. If their parents are still alive, they will

have wealth and blessings for a hundred years. Parents of the past seven generations will also be reborn in the heavens. They will be transformed and reborn in the light of the celestial flower and will experience limitless bliss.”

Then the Buddha enjoined the assembled monks of all the ten directions, “First of all, for the sake of the donors, you must pray for their parents of the past seven generations. You should practise *dhyāna* (contemplation) and then, with a settled mind, receive the food. When you first receive the food, you should place it in front of a stupa. After you have finished your prayers (*mantras*), you may help yourselves to the food.”

Thereupon, Bhikshu Mahāmaudgalyāyana, along with all the *bodhisattvas* in the great assembly, rejoiced greatly and the sorrowful sound of his crying ceased. On that very day, Mahāmaudgalyāyana’s mother was freed from the suffering of the realm of hungry ghosts where she had been living for one *kalpa* (i.e. a long period of time).

*Ullambana Sūtra*, T16 685:779b–c; cf. in ASNC pp.21–22, BSUS

According to the story, Mahāmaudgalyāyana’s parents and seven past generations all receive liberation. Mahāmaudgalyāyana then asks whether the ceremony can be repeated annually at the end of the rainy season for the benefit of the families of “all future disciples”, and the Buddha readily concurs:

Then Mahāmaudgalyāyana again addressed the Buddha, “My parents who raised me have received the power of the virtues of the three jewels (Buddha, *Dharma*, and *sangha*), thanks to the spiritual power of the assembled monks. If all future disciples of the Buddha are dutiful to their parents and uphold this *Ullambana Sūtra*, will they then be able to liberate their present parents as well as their parents of the past seven generations?”

The Buddha replied, “Very good! I am glad you asked that question. I wanted to speak about this, and now you have asked the question. O son of good family, if there are *bhikshus*, *bhikṣuṇīs*, kings, crown princes, ministers, prime ministers, head officials, various civil servants and tens of thousands of other citizens, who are compassionately dutiful to the parents who bore them and to the parents of seven lives past, then they should, on the fifteenth day of the seventh month – a joyous day for the Buddha and a day after the retreat – offer a table spread with food of hundreds of flavours to the assembled monks from all the ten directions who participated in the retreat. They should then ask the monks to pray that their present parents will have a lifespan of one hundred years, free of illness and all kinds of suffering, and that



their parents of the past seven generations may also be free from the suffering of the realm of hungry ghosts and be born in the realm of heavenly beings (*devas*), which is accompanied by infinite blessings and bliss.”

The Buddha then enjoined all the good men and women, “Disciples of the Buddha who practise filial piety should constantly think of their parents and make offerings to their parents of the past seven generations. Every fifteenth day of the seventh month, out of filial piety recall your parents of the past seven generations and prepare a table of offerings for the Buddha and the monks in order to repay your debt to your parents. All disciples of the Buddha should uphold this teaching.” Upon hearing this discourse of the Buddha, Bhikshu Mahāmaudgalyāyana and the four groups of followers (monks, nuns, laymen, and laywomen) were delighted and paid reverence to him.

*Ullambana Sūtra*, T16 685:779c; cf. in ASNC pp.22–23, BSUS

The intention of this apocryphal text, written more than a thousand years after the time of the Buddha, seems to have been to endorse and provide enthusiasm for the custom of providing lavishly for the monks during the festivities at the end of the rainy-season retreat. From a cynical perspective, it might be regarded as a means of ensuring that the monks were abundantly catered for at that time! Certainly, the story is an integral aspect of the *Ullambana* festival that is celebrated with sincere belief in many Buddhist countries.

Worship of and providing food for ancestors (*S. pitṛi-pūjana*) has been a part of traditional Indian culture since Vedic times, and is found in various forms in many ancient cultures. In Japan, the indigenous *Shintō* religion, which has traditionally regarded ancestors with great reverence, has been influential in the development of Japanese Buddhism. The *Urabon*, *Obon* or *Bon* three-day festival, which honours the spirits of one’s ancestors, is the Japanese variant of the *Ullambana* festival, *urabon* being a phonetic rendering of *ullambana*. The part of the festival that entails the feeding of hungry ghosts is known as *segaki*. To the accompaniment of chanted *sūtras*, monks and nuns offer oblations of rice and water to departed spirits, especially to those trapped in the realm of hungry ghosts. The ritual normally takes place in Buddhist temples or monasteries, but it can also be performed anywhere and at any time. The timing of the festival varies from region to region. Traditionally held on the full-moon day of the seventh month, the timing was changed when Japan switched to the Gregorian calendar in 1873. Some regions adhere to the lunar timing, while others begin their *Obon* festivities on the fifteenth of either July or August.



In China, the equivalent festival, *Fàng yàn kǒu* (‘Releasing the Burning Mouths’), is an elaborate and colourful pageant, with ornate street banners and decorations, accompanied by music and dancing. The monks themselves wear red or golden, five-pointed hats, symbolizing the five celestial *buddhas*. Complex rituals lasting around five hours are enacted to summon the inhabitants of the six realms of existence, following which the hungry ghosts are released, honoured, and freed of their afflictions (*kleshas*). They pay homage to the three jewels (*triratna* – the Buddha, the *Dharma*, the *sangha*) and vow to become *bodhisattvas*. At length, having been taught the *Dharma*, they pass on to the pure lands (*buddha* realms).<sup>2</sup>

See also: **uposhadha**.

1. See Matthew T. Kapstein, *Contributions to the Cultural History of Early Tibet*, CCHT pp.227–28.
2. See “fang yankou,” *Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*, PDB.

**but** (P), **ṣanam** (A/P) (pl. *aṣnām*), **wathan** (A) (pl. *wuthun*, *awthān*), **min dūn Allāh** (A), **shurakāʾ** (A) *Lit.* idol (*but*, *ṣanam*, *wathan*); others (*min*) besides (*dūn*) God (*Allāh*); partners (*shurakāʾ*). *Shurakāʾ* is from the same root as *shirk* (association; polytheism, idolatry), the cardinal sin and a fundamental heresy of Islam. By extension, *but* and *ṣanam* are also used in the language of lovers to mean beloved or sweetheart, both worldly and divine.

In Islam, perhaps the most emphatically monotheistic of religions, idolatry is strictly forbidden. The *Kaʿbah* itself was filled with idols until the Prophet reclaimed it for the one God, and the *Qurʾān* itself relates with relish the story of Abraham smashing the idols in the temple.<sup>1</sup> The *Qurʾān* has little regard for idols, idolatry, or idolaters. It points out that idols cannot respond to prayers, confer benefits, give guidance, or perform any acts of creation:

They worship others besides God (*min dūn Allāh*), which can confer on them no benefits from heaven or earth. Compare none with God; for God knows, and you know not.

*Qurʾān* 16:73–74; cf. AYA, KPA

Say: “Can any of your partners (*shurakāʾ*) bring the creation into being, and then do the same again?” Say: “It is God who brings the creation into being, and then does the same again. How is it that you are so misled?”

Say: “Can any of your partners (*shurakāʾ*) guide you to the truth?”

Say: “God can guide you to the truth. Who is more worthy to be

followed – He who can guide you to the truth, or he that cannot and is himself in need of guidance? What has come over you that you so judge?”

Most of them follow nothing but conjecture (*ẓann*): but conjecture (*ẓann*) is no substitute for truth. God is well aware of all they do.

*Qur’ān 10:34–36; cf. KPA, MGK*

Who does greater wrong than a man who invents a falsehood about God or denies His revelations? Truly, wrongdoers will never prosper. They worship others besides *Allāh* (*min dūn Allāh*) who can neither harm nor help them, and they say: “These will intercede for us with God.”

*Qur’ān 10:17–18; cf. AYA, KPA*

There are those who take (for worship) others besides *Allāh* (*min dūn Allāh*), loving them as they should love God, though the faithful are stronger in their love of God. But when they face their punishment, the unrighteous will know that power belongs to God alone, and God is severe in punishment.

Then will those who were followed disown those who followed them, and the bonds that now unite them will break asunder. Then those followers will say: “Could we but live again, we would disown them as they have now disowned us.” Thus will God show them their own deeds. And they will sigh with remorse, but will never emerge from the fire (hell).

*Qur’ān 2:165–67; cf. AYA, KPA, MGK*

Therefore, the believers are advised against having anything to do with “idols”:

Shun the filth of idols (*awthān*) and avoid all falsehoods.

*Qur’ān 22:30; cf. KPA, MGK*

Idolatry is such an anathema to Islam that during the early centuries, all figurative art, depicting any part of the human form, was forbidden. This rule was absolute and universal, giving rise to the beautiful and intricately geometric designs for which Islamic artists are so famous. Ultimately, the rule was relaxed, and figures began to appear on pottery and in paintings, but never in a mosque. The rationale is that a worshipper might gaze adoringly at a beautiful statue or picture, channelling his feelings of devotion to God through that representation. To the Muslim mind, the Christian cross, together with all representations of Jesus, the Christian saints, the Virgin Mary and all other such icons are idols.

The *Qur'ān*'s unequivocal attitude towards idolatry is partly attributed to the fact that at the time of Muḥammad, Arab paganism had gone beyond the stage at which gods and goddesses are viewed as symbols of a Reality that is actually beyond them. By the time of the Prophet, the tradition was so deeply ingrained that ritualistic worship had become an end in itself. The idol was no longer simply a symbol of something higher, but was regarded as a deity or power in itself, and the worshipper had become a willing participant in the illusion. *Shirk* (association with something other than God) is the fundamental error in Islam because God is Truth or Reality. To associate anything with Him as though it were Reality amounts to denying Him.

Muslim theologians and Sufis alike often speak of all that is other than God as an idol and a source of *shirk* (polytheism). Sufis especially maintain that anything that leads the attention away from God is effectively an idol. This can be something either positive or negative:

The term *but* is used to express things both positive and negative. Whenever anything that is the secret of one's heart is sought and wanted, this an 'ārīf (mystic) would call an idol (*but*). If that thing is something other than God, it is regarded as negative. But if it is one of the spiritual stations, whether outer or inner, it is regarded as positive. Even though the latter condition is in reality negative (since it is not God), in the initial stages of the spiritual path, it is regarded as positive and agreeable (since its attraction is spiritual).

*Bākhazī, Awrād al-Aḥbāb wa Fuṣūṣ al-Ādāb; cf. AAF2 p.246*

On the negative side, all material things that are the object of desire are regarded as idols:

He who does not turn his face towards God:  
deem all his knowledge and possessions to be an idol (*but*).  
He who turns his face away from God's presence:  
in truth I do not call him a man.

*Sanā'ī, Ḥadīqat al-Ḥaqīqat 1, HHGP p.18, HHS p.78; cf. HHG p.29*

Similarly, 'Aṭṭār in his allegory, the *Conference of the Birds*, says that "love of gold and jewels" is "idolatry":

The hoopoe answers him: "Besotted fool,  
suppose you get this gold for which you drool –  
what would you do but guard it night and day  
while life itself – unnoticed – slips away?  
The love of gold and jewels is blasphemy:  
our faith is wrecked by such idolatry (*āzarī*).

To love gold is to be an infidel,  
 an idol worshipper (*but-parast*) who merits hell.  
 On Judgment Day the miser's secret greed  
 stares from his face for everyone to read.

*ʿAṭṭār, Conference of the Birds 1018–22, MTAN p.278, CBD p.49*

Many seekers may appear spiritual on the outside, but on the inside are still full of material desires:

You seem a *ṣūfī* to the common folk  
 but hide a hundred idols (*but*) with your cloak –  
 If you're a eunuch underneath, don't dress  
 in clothes of high heroic manliness!

*ʿAṭṭār, Conference of the Birds 1948–49, MTAN p.318, CBD p.94*

Even with some spiritual progress, if the “first glass” of the wine of divine love is treated as an end in itself, it has become an “idol” and an obstruction on the way:

If you discover in your quest a jewel,  
 do not, like some delighted doting fool,  
 gloat over it – search on, you're not its slave;  
 It is not treasures by the way you crave.  
 To make an idol (*but*) of the gems you find  
 is to be drunk, to cloud the searching mind –  
 at this first glass your soul should not submit;  
 Seek out the winepress of the Infinite.

*ʿAṭṭār, Conference of the Birds 3341–45, MTAN pp.384–85, CBD p.171*

Rūmī says that all “forms” are idols, at whatever level they are encountered:

While you remain in form,  
 you are an idol worshipper (*but-parast*):  
 Pass beyond forms and behold the Reality!

*Rūmī, Maṣnavī I:2893; cf. MJR2 p.158*

He also says that the essence of all such idols is the *naḥs* – the ego and lower mind:

The idol (*but*) of your mind (*naḥs*)  
 is the mother of all idols (*but ḥā*),  
 because a material idol (*but*) is only a snake,  
 while this idol (*but*) is a dragon.

The mind (*nafs*) is like iron and stone (which produce fire):  
 the material idol (*but*) is like the sparks,  
 and those sparks are quenched by water.  
 But how can stone and iron be allayed by water?  
 How can a man, having these two, be secure?

The idol (*but*) is the black water in a jug:  
 the mind (*nafs*) is a fountain for the black water.  
 The sculptured idol (*but-i manḥūt*) is like the black torrent:  
 the idol-making mind (*nafs-i but-gar*)  
 is a fountain full of water for it.  
 A single piece of stone will break a hundred pitchers,  
 but a fountain constantly jets forth water.  
 It is easy to break an idol (*but*), very easy:  
 to regard the mind (*nafs*) as easy to subdue is folly, folly.  
 O son, if you seek to know the form of the mind (*nafs*),  
 read the story of hell with its seven gates.  
 Every moment it contrives an act of deceit.

*Rūmī, Maṣnavī I:772–80; cf. MJR2 p.44*

Others have said the same:

The *nafs* is an idol (*ṣanam*), and looking at it is polytheism (*shirk*).  
 Being conscious of it is worship.

*Abū Bakr Wāsiṭī, in Miṣbāḥ al-Hidāyah wa-Miftāḥ al-Kifāyah,*  
*MHK p.88, in SSE3 p.221*

Likewise, in the *Conference of the Birds*, ‘Attār explains:

The man of understanding puts aside,  
 to travel on this path, all outward pride.  
 (The courage of his choice will honour those  
 who taught this pilgrim everything he knows).  
 If you seem more substantial than a hair,  
 you’ve made an idol (*but*) of your self (*khvīsh*) – take care,  
 whatever praise or blame may say of you,  
 you’re an idolater (*but-gar*) in all you do.

*‘Attār, Conference of the Birds 1941–44, MTAN p.318, CBD p.93*

Typical of Sufi poetry, things that are anathema to Islamic culture are commonly used in imagery concerning the mystic path. Thus, the “idol” is used as a metaphor for the divine beloved – God or the *murshid* – whose real form the devotee finds in his heart.

See also: **but** (7.2), **but-kadah**, **but-parast**, **shirk**.

1. *Qurʾān* 21:51–71.

**but-kadah, but-khānah** (P) *Lit.* idol (*but*) house (*kadah, khānah*); idol temple. In Sufi terminology, the inner spiritual heart where the “idol” of Reality is sought:

Our spirit is itself the idol (*but*)  
 and our heart the idol temple (*but-khānah*);  
 Whoever is not of this persuasion is a stranger to us.  
*ʿAyn al-Quḍāt Hamadānī, Tamhīdāt* 163, *TQH* p.116, in *SSE3* p.222

Since in Sufism the divine beloved within is also known as the ‘idol’, so the inner temple of the heart where the beloved is worshipped is known as the “idol temple”. In this “temple”, the pangs of love and yearning are assuaged in the spiritual meeting with the beloved, when all aspects of human nature are left behind:

I found a cure for my anguish in the idol temple (*but-kadah*);  
 My soul cried out again and again,  
 for gone was my Muslim nature.  
*ʿAṭṭār, Dīvān* 189:3695, *DASN* p.201; cf. in *SSE3* p.223

Before it was ‘liberated’ by Muḥammad, the *Kaʿbah*, now the holy shrine of the Muslims in Mecca, had been an idol temple devoted to pagan worship, with over three hundred idols. Alluding to the Muslim worship that takes place at the *Kaʿbah* as effectively idol worship, Sufis often speak of leaving the *Kaʿbah* (symbolizing Muslim worship) for the real inner idol temple:

Last night that alien idol (*but-i bīgānah*) gave wine in a cup,  
 and dragged me in chains from the *Kaʿbah*  
 to the idol temple (*but-khānah*).  
*ʿAṭṭār, Dīvān* 189:3694, *DASN* p.200, in *SSE3* p.222

In the same vein, they say that the real place of worship and holy shrine is in the spiritual heart:

No one has seen an idol temple like the *Kaʿbah* of my heart.  
*ʿAlī Shāh Kirmānī, Dīvān-i Mushtāqīyah* 282, *DMK* p.188, in *SSE3* p.223

*But-khānah* and *but-kadah* also refers to the heart of a perfect man (*insān al-kāmil*) because only his heart is truly a place of worship. For other human

beings, the heart is generally crowded with the idols of desire, fear, attachment, ego, and so on.

See also: **but**, **Ka‘bah**.

**but-parast** (P) *Lit.* idol (*but*) worshipper (*parast*); idolater. Idolatry is anathema to the Muslim mind, yet Sufi poets often speak of mystic devotion as ‘idolatry’, and the perfect man (*insān al-kāmil*) or perfect *murshid* (master) as the ‘idol’. Shabistarī explains that if the nature of this “idol” were truly understood, then “idolatry” would be accepted as the “true religion”:

O Muslim, if you only knew what the idol (*but*) is,  
you would know that true religion lies in idolatry (*but-parastī*).

*Shabistarī, Gulshan-i Rāz 869–70, GRS p.107; cf. in SSE3 p.221*

As with other terms related to idols, the Sufis used *but-parast* in both positive and negative senses. To some, an idolater is anyone in quest of the Divine. Bākhārī, on the other hand, says that it is a seeker who has become attached through pride to an intermediate station on the inner journey:

*But-parast* also describes one who has reached some level (of spiritual attainment) but is attached to it, proudly thinking that the goal has been reached.

*Bākhārī, Awrād al-Aḥbāb wa Fuṣūṣ al-Ādāb, AAF2 p.246; cf. in SSE3 p.223*

Sufis have often pointed out the impossibility of religion being truly monotheistic. So long as the mind of the worshipper is outwardly directed, functioning in the physical creation, making ‘idols’ of that which is other than God, religion and spirituality will always include the idol worshipper.

See also: **but**.

**butsudan** (J) *Lit.* *buddha* (*butsu*) platform (*dan*); an altar or shrine found in most traditional Japanese Buddhist homes, on which an image of a *buddha* or *bodhisattva* is enshrined together with memorial tablets of deceased relatives, which serves as a private, domestic shrine; also known as *shumidan* (Sumeru platform), Mount Sumeru being the sacred and central mountain of Buddhist mythological cosmology. Larger *butsudans* may be found in monasteries and temples.

A domestic *butsudan* is a piece of furniture, generally a portable or semi-portable cabinet made of lacquered wood, though it can also be made of stone or clay. It can be free-standing or may take the form of an altar set into a wall

niche. Vendors sell *butsudan* to fit large or small homes and to accommodate most budgets. Although there are variations between sects, a *butsudan* usually houses the image of a *buddha*, most often of the historical Buddha, though it can also be of a celestial *buddha* or *bodhisattva*. Memorial tablets (*ihai*), inscribed with the names (*kaimyō*) of deceased relatives, often flank the image, and the *butsudan* is decorated with candlesticks, incense burners and flower arrangements, together with icons and other objects regarded as sacred, especially by the particular sect to which the family belongs. There is also an associated stand or shelf upon which family members can place offerings of flowers, as well as food and drink such as sweet rice dishes, fruits, tea, and water. Offerings are made both to the central figure and to the deceased. Ancestor worship was long ago incorporated into popular Japanese Buddhism from the *Shintō* religion.

Offerings, usually by the women of the house, may be performed on a daily basis, or on the monthly anniversaries of deceased relatives, or less frequently. On the death anniversaries of the departed, or during special festivals such as the midsummer *Obon* (the Hungry Ghosts Festival) or during spring and autumn festivals, the temple priest is customarily invited to the house to chant Buddhist *sūtras* before the Buddha's image in the presence of the family. He presents offerings to the Buddha, and dedicates the merit (*kudoku*) of reciting the *sūtras* to the deceased. Priests of the *Sōtō Zen* school generally use a formula that is an abbreviation of the much longer dedication of merit used at a funeral:

We humbly beg the three treasures for their attentive concern. Having chanted *sūtras* and *dhāraṇīs*, we dedicate the merit generated thereby to the spirit of so-and-so (*dharma* name of deceased), that it may adorn his/her place of karmic retribution.

*Dedication of Merit for Householders, in ZRZB p.76*

During domestic religious ceremonies, it is customary to open the doors of the *butsudan* to display its contents, the doors being closed again before sunset. Some households place the *butsudan* upon a larger cabinet in which important family documents are kept. Traditionally, the *butsudan* serves as a focal point for family members to remember and pay their daily respects to the Buddha and to their ancestors. Many announce special events, such as marriages, births, graduations and so on, to the *butsudan*, the intention being to include the deceased relatives in their lives. Memorial ceremonies for the dead are usually performed before the *butsudan*, at which time the memorial tablets (*ihai*) become the primary focus.

The origin of the *butsudan* was probably an imperial edict in 655 CE, which, following the construction of a court chapel, required that a sanctuary should be set up in every home. It was not until the seventeenth century,



however, that the *butsudan* became a common domestic feature. In accordance with government legislation intended to eliminate Christianity, Buddhist priests were required to inspect homes to ensure the existence of a properly maintained domestic shrine. In those times, Buddhism and *Shintō* had merged, and often shared the same shrines, temples, and officiating monks. In modern Japanese households, the *butsudan* has either replaced or stands alongside the *Shintō kamidana*, a similar miniature shrine used for daily worship of the ancestors. The socio-religious reality of modern Japan is that Buddhism, Christianity and *Shintō* are non-exclusive and play different roles in the lives of the same people and families. Marriages, for instance, are commonly performed in a *Shintō* or Christian ceremony, while Buddhist services are used for funerals and more sombre occasions.<sup>1</sup>

1. For many of these details, see “butsudan,” *Illustrated Encyclopedia of Zen Buddhism*, IEZB; “The Japanese and Buddhism,” buddhanet.net, ret. February 2018; “butsudan,” *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 2012.

**ceremonies** See **rituals and ceremonies**.

**chaitya** (S/H), **cetiya** (Pa), **mchod rten** (T), **zhīfí** (C), **shitai** (J) *Lit.* memorial, reminder; a funereal monument housing a relic; a stupa, a reliquary; a commemorative tumulus, burial mound, or mausoleum; a Buddhist sanctuary, shrine, prayer hall, chapel or temple, especially one that includes a stupa or reliquary; any place or object that acts as a reminder of the Buddha; a sacred tree (usually a religious fig, *Ficus religiosa*) growing on a burial mound containing the ashes or a relic of a deceased holy person; in Jainism, an image or idol set up for veneration and devotion in a temple, a home, or other location; a prevalent term in Jain and Buddhist traditions. Although the veneration of relics is practised in Jainism, it is more common in Buddhism. In Buddhism, while a stupa by definition contains a relic of the Buddha or celebrated monk, a *chaitya* may be erected simply as a memorial shrine, containing no relic.

A Jain or Buddhist temple is also known as a *chaityālaya*. *Chaitya* appears in terms such as *chaityavāsin* (a Jain mendicant monk who lives in a temple complex), *chaitya-vandana* (Jain temple worship), and the universally used *chaityavriksha* (temple tree, sacred tree).

Every Buddhist temple contains a *chaitya*. Many are no more than three to six feet in size, located in the temple courtyard; others are large halls (*chaityagriha*) designed to accommodate many people. In addition to an ‘official’ *chaitya*, many temples also contain a number of smaller *chaityas*, built by members of the Buddhist community in memory of the dead. According to a Thai commentary on the Buddhist code of monastic conduct (the *Vinaya*):

It is a *bhikkhu* tradition that whoever enters the area around a *cetiya*, which is a place for the recollection of the master, should behave in a respectful manner, neither opening his umbrella, nor putting on sandals, nor wearing his robe covering both shoulders. They should not speak loudly there or sit with their legs spread apart with their feet pointing (towards the *cetiya*), thus showing disrespect for that place. They must not defecate or urinate, spit upon the terraces of the *cetiya* or before an image of the exalted Buddha, their good behaviour thus showing respect for the master.

*Vinayamukha; cf. EVV2 p.82*

Some Buddhist *chaityas* are halls carved into the rock at ancient monastic or temple sites, more specifically known as *chaityagrihas* (*chaitya* halls) often sporting large-scale, elaborate and intricately detailed architectural features and decorative carvings. The earliest such hall is probably one at Bhaja in Maharashtra, which dates from the first century BCE. The largest, at Karli, also in Maharashtra, dates from the second half of the first century CE, and is 125 feet long. The most celebrated *chaityas* are found in the Ajanta cave complex, again in Maharashtra, and date from the second century BCE to perhaps as late as the seventh century CE.

*Theravāda* Buddhism also uses the Pali term *cetiya* for cult objects, sacred symbols, images and places that serve as reminders of the Buddha. According to a story related in the *Kālingabodhi Jātaka*, Ānanda, a close companion and disciple of the Buddha, proposes to set up an image of the Buddha in the Jetavana monastery so that people can remember the Buddha by making flower offerings whenever they wish, whether the Buddha is in residence or not. In response, the Buddha asks Ānanda how many kinds of *cetiya* there are. Ānanda enumerates three: *sārīrika* (of the body), *pāribhogika* (of association), and *uddesika* (by indication or representation). The Buddha thereupon rejects body-part reminders or relics, such as a tooth or piece of bone, since they would only be available after his death. Representational reminders, such as images and idols of the Buddha, are also rejected on the grounds that they are a matter of imagination; and he concludes that only a *bodhi* tree (wisdom tree) or symbols thereof that had been associated with a *buddha* are true reminders.<sup>1</sup>

The story, or something like it, is probably the basis of a Thai Buddhist chronicle, written in Pali by a Thai monk during the early fifteenth century, which concerns the origins and travels of a renowned statue of the Buddha known as the Buddha Sihing. According to the chronicle, the statue originated in Sri Lanka in 157 CE and was brought to Thailand in 1307 CE. The writer's purpose was to eulogize the power of the statue and the status of the royal lineage possessing it at the time the chronicle was written. The statue presently resides at the National Museum in Bangkok. It is believed that

people will prosper wherever the Buddha Sihing is present. There are two other Buddha Sihing statues, presently located in the provinces of Chiang Mai and Nakhon Sri Thammarat. The chronicle also relates the story of the Buddha's conversation with Ānanda regarding the three kinds of *cetiya*.<sup>2</sup>

In later times, *pāribhogika* or associative reminders came to include anything that had been used or touched by the Buddha, such as his robe, his begging bowl or his footprints, and all the places he visited during his life and ministry. These things are regarded as sources of spiritual power. *Uddesika* reminders are copies, replicas, or representations of *pāribhogika* reminders. Hence, statues, images, trees said to have been grown from cuttings or seeds of the original *bodhi* tree, replicas of stupas containing relics or footprints, paintings of places associated with the Buddha, and all such things are *uddesika-cetiya*.

There is a fourth category of *cetiya*, *dharmacetiya* (a reminder of the *Dhamma*, the teachings and the Way), which was added in later times and which is arguably the most significant of them all. *Dharmacetiya* covers all the teachings of the Buddha, especially the original canon of Pali teachings, preserved at first in the oral tradition and only later written down. While outer objects may hold some historical fascination or interest, the essence of the Buddha's life was what he taught and how his immediate disciples and later followers lived those teachings. However, once again exhibiting the outward human tendency, a *dharmacetiya* has also come to mean a shrine in which the Pali texts are preserved.

In Jainism, a *chaitya* is either a temple, or an image or idol. In the latter context, Nemichandra mentions a traditional fivefold classification. Representations can be in the form of a devotional image (*bhakti-chaitya*) set up in a home, for use at prayer times; an auspicious image (*mangala-chaitya*) above an entrance in the middle of the lintel; an image unique (*nishrā-kṛita-chaitya*) to a particular mendicant order (*gachchha*) or used by all mendicant orders (*anishrā-kṛita-chaitya*); or an eternal image (*shāshvata-chaitya*), believed to have always been in existence, such as those said to be located in various heavenly realms.<sup>3</sup> To this list, Devendra, a thirteenth-century Jain ascetic, adds an image used by those of the same faith (*sādharmika-chaitya*).<sup>4</sup> Hemachandra encourages the building of new temples and the restoration or rebuilding of those that have fallen into disrepair.<sup>5</sup> Devendra maintains that those who do so will be praised by their fellow men and will be reborn either as gods (*devas*) or in some well-placed earthly family.<sup>6</sup>

Referring to *chaityas* as temples, Āshādhara says that their purpose is as places where the attention can be diverted from the attractions of the world by means of religious ceremonies. They are also *āshramas* for mendicants. Temples, he adds, should be set inside a garden, with a lotus pool as a source of flower offerings to be made in *pūjā* (worship). Temples should also be places where food and medical assistance are available.<sup>7</sup>

1. *Jātaka* 479, *Kālingabodhi Jātaka*, *PTSJ4* p.228, *JSBB4* p.142.
2. See James Taylor, in *Radical Egalitarianism*, *RERR* pp.41–42.
3. Nemichandra, *Pravachana-sāroddhāra*, *PSND* p.659, in *JYMS* p.236.
4. Devendra, *Shrāddha-dina-kṛitya*, *SDKD* p.151, in *JYMS* p.236.
5. Hemachandra, *Yoga Shāstra* 3:120, *YSHB* p.585, in *JYMS* p.236.
6. Devendra, *Shrāddha-dina-kṛitya*, *SDKD* pp.99–100, in *JYMS* p.236.
7. Āshādhara, *Sāgāra-dharmāmṛita* 2, p.40, in *JYMS* p.236.

**chakra** (S), **cakka** (Pa) *Lit.* wheel, disc; used symbolically in various ways; six centres of subtle life energy or *prāṇa* in the physical body, variously described and named in yogic and tantric texts, both Hindu and Buddhist, as centres of the body's complex of *nāḍīs* (channels of *prāṇa*), and which are also used as focuses for the attention during meditation; the Buddhist *dharmachakra* (wheel of *Dharma*), which with eight spokes symbolizes the eightfold Path of the Buddha, and with twelve spokes represents the twelve links (*nidānas*) in the chain of dependent origination (*pratītya-samutpāda*); an alternative name for a circular *maṇḍala* (a symbolic design used for religious or spiritual purposes).

See also: **chakra** (5.1), **dhāraṇā** (8.5), **dharmachakra** (7.5), **haṭha yoga** (8.5), **maṇḍala**.

**'cham** (T), **tiàoqiàn** (C) *Lit.* dance; specifically, a form of ritual monastic dance in tantric Buddhism, performed (often for the laity) by exotically masked and costumed *lamas*, accompanied by traditional musical instruments; *lama* dancing, performed in Tibet, Bhutan, Nepal, India, and Mongolia; regarded as an offering to the deities and believed to be a source of merit (*punya*) and good *karma* for the audience. Some *'cham* dances consist of mostly simple, slow, jumping steps, one foot at a time, carefully choreographed and keeping time with the rhythmic sounds of a wind instrument, a drum, and cymbals; others are more energetic, with the monks whirling in a shifting, *maṇḍala*-shaped pattern.

The ritual *'cham* dance is generally performed at any of the *Vajrayāna* Tibetan Buddhist festivals, often for the entertainment and edification of the laity. The performance is usually held in a monastery courtyard, and may be staged over several days. The performing monks, who have often spent a significant amount of time in training, wear colourful costumes and brightly painted masks.

Different schools and monastic traditions stage different *'cham* dances. In some instances, as in the *'cham* dance performed by the *Drikung Kagyü* order of Tibetan Buddhism, the participants take on the roles of different tantric

deities and forces, such as *Mahākāla*, the protector of *Dharma* (Buddhist teaching and path), who subjugates the evil forces that are inimical to the *Dharma*. Sometimes, episodes from the lives of popular Buddhist figures such as Padmasambhava are depicted and, through such stories, the dance may inculcate moral principles, such as compassion.

Particular historical events are also depicted in 'cham dances, like a famous debate between Héshang Móhēyǎn (a Chinese *Chán* monk from the Northern School) and Kamalashīla (representing Tibetan *Vajrayāna*) at the Council of Lhasa in 793 CE regarding which of their schools of Buddhism was authentic. The 'cham dance commemorating the event is staged annually at the *Kumbum* monastery in Qinghai. The monastery, although in China, is very much Tibetan in character, the majority of monks being Tibetan, with a small number of Mongols. Tibetan texts, with some variations in the narrative, maintain that the debate was decided in favour of Kamalashīla, though this is contradicted by a number of Chinese sources. Their difference of opinion concerned whether enlightenment was gradual (Kamalashīla's perspective) or sudden (as taught by Móhēyǎn). However, there is some discussion concerning whether the debate ever happened, and if it did, whether it took place at Lhasa or at some other location.<sup>1</sup>

Buddhist monks consider the 'cham dance to be a form of meditation. The performance may be preceded by days or even several weeks of almost continuous meditation in which the monks visualize and invoke the protective tantric deities (*dharmapālas*). During the performance, using *mantras*, *mudrās* (gestures) and various dance movements, they draw on this meditation to help visualize themselves as these deities and identify with their attributes. Lobsang Dorje, one time dance master at the Likir monastery in Ladakh (North India), part of the *Drikung Kagyü* order, observed, "The dances are very much in the mind. To the dancers who are disciplined, to them gods and *dharmapālas* really come, and the dancer becomes like them."<sup>2</sup>

The intention is to draw in the evil from the audience and from the world around, and direct it into a human effigy made of dough. At the height of the dance, the dance master (T. 'chams dpon) slices open the effigy with a ritual dagger (T. *phur ba*, S. *kīla*). Drawing the evil into his own body, he transforms it by showing it the path to peace and liberation. As Thupstan Standin, one time abbot of Likir monastery, explained, "Through 'cham we are trying to destroy evil with love and compassion." Similarly, Master Sonam Kunga (1937–2014) also of Ladakh, remarks, "The performing of 'cham not only destroys all obstacles to *Dharma* and its people, it also purifies and blesses the whole earth. These dances leave powerful karmic imprints in the minds of the people who observe them."<sup>3</sup> Likewise, Tsering Drujen, abbot of the Matho monastery in Ladakh, says: "From the dance, peace and happiness overcome the evils of the human world. Epidemics are overcome, war and famine are averted; all these evils are put to an end."<sup>4</sup>

The dramatic depiction of symbolic stories by masked and elaborately costumed dancers and actors, often portraying deities and other mythological characters, is an ancient Indian tradition, as in *Kathākali* ('story-play'), a stylized dance-drama of Kerala, in South India. It seems probable that the tantric versions of masked dance are a development of this ancient tradition.

1. "Kamalaśīla," *Wikipedia*, ret. November 2015.
2. "Cham," [abandonedgranary.weebly.com/cham.html](http://abandonedgranary.weebly.com/cham.html), ret. November 2015.
3. "Cham," [coreofculture.org/cham.html](http://coreofculture.org/cham.html), ret. November 2015.
4. "Cham," [abandonedgranary.weebly.com/cham.html](http://abandonedgranary.weebly.com/cham.html), ret. November 2015.

**chàn, chànhuǐ** (C) *Lit.* to feel remorse, to regret, to repent (*chàn*); to confess (*chànhuǐ*) (one's sins) to heaven or to a priest; the act of being penitent, of disclosing and confessing one's wrongdoing; part of a Daoist ritual in which a person publicly acknowledges and seeks forgiveness for wrongful acts committed, especially a practitioner desiring spiritual cleansing in order to become inwardly more receptive to the *Dào*.

Since early times, rituals (*zhāi*) have been conducted for the confession of sins, to cure diseases caused by wrongdoing in the present life, and to avoid retribution for them after death. From the early centuries CE, as a result of the growing Buddhist influence, the idea of repentance was incorporated into Daoist rituals. From around the fifth century CE, the belief developed that these rituals would invoke salvation, not only for oneself, but also for one's parents and ancestors.

Various Daoist schools introduced repentance rituals for their members as a means of purification. One of the earliest was performed by the *Tàipíng* school, established around 175 CE. Its founder, master Zhāng Jué, regarded sin as the root of all illness, with good works and meritorious service being the keys to self-healing. He therefore placed great emphasis on helping the poor, whose living conditions made them vulnerable to epidemics and other communal difficulties.

Before carrying out such good works it was necessary to perform a ritual confession. These confessions would take place during a public ceremony where participants with hair dishevelled and faces smeared with mud and soot to symbolize their repentance would recite their sins. For the healing to be effective, the confession and plea for mercy had to be sincere. This mud-and-soot ritual (*tútàn zhāi*) was intended to achieve the remission not only of the practitioners' sins, but also the sins of their ancestors.

The *Tiānshī* school, founded in 142 CE by master Zhāng Dàolíng, similarly regarded sin as the basis of illness, and it too made broad use of confessional practices. This school provided 'chambers of quietude' for practitioners, for the purpose of reflecting on their faults before making a confession.

Once the confession had been made, the officiating priest would write the practitioner's name and offences on a piece of paper. Two further copies would be made and the three copies submitted as a petition for forgiveness to each of the 'Three Officials (*sānqīng*, Three Pure Ones)', the three most senior deities in religious Daoism. One copy would be placed on a mountain for the Official of Heaven, one would be buried in the earth for the Official of Earth, and one would be immersed in water for the Official of Water.

The *Língbǎo* school, founded in the early fifth century CE, also performed rites of confession in which petitions would be submitted before the same Three Officials. These rites – involving both *dàoshì* (priests) and practitioners, and lasting several days – were ascetic practices intended to induce physical exhaustion that would effect an inner purification leading to absolution.

A *Táng* dynasty (618–907) text, the *Scripture on Prohibitions and Precepts*, said to be a revelation of Lǎojūn (Lord Lǎo, the deified Lǎozǐ), includes the admonition:

Always burn incense and bow in prostrations, repent (*chàn*) all sins  
and regret all transgressions.

*Jinjiè jīng*, ZW762, S784, CCED p.228

The same text summarizes the precepts and admonitions to be followed by Daoist practitioners ("the celestial brotherhood"):

O you good men and women! Once you have received life, regard your human body as most noble and begin the practice of cultivation: observe the purgations and venerate the precepts; perform prostrations and burn incense; offer rites to the *Dào* and chant and memorize (the scriptures); give freely in donation; bring forth good prayers; sponsor the creation of statues, and copy the scriptures; seek out a master and ask about the *Dào*; establish and erect sacred (*xuán*) altars; put others first and yourself last; rescue and save the impoverished and destitute; release living creatures, thus redeeming lives; repent your sins (*chànhuǐ*) and pray for mercy; be forbearing and patient and make a determined effort (to improve); confront wrongdoing with strength and courage; find peace in your mind and develop a firm will; discourse and explain, teach and educate; open up salvation for all in the celestial brotherhood.

*Jinjiè jīng*, ZW762, S784; cf. CCED p.234

A eighteenth-century hermit known as Yǎngzhēnzǐ ('Master who Cultivates Reality') asserts that true repentance implies thoroughly examining and reflecting upon one's past mistakes and wrongdoings:



Someone may ask: “Can people, who have sinned, repent (*chàn*)?”

Answer: “Whatever is done in the past, be it substantial or trivial, if you search within and without for the wrongs in it, that is quite an achievement. This is called true repentance (*chànhuǐ*).”

*Yǎngzhēnzǐ, Yǎngzhēn jí, JY241*

See also: **pāpadeshanā, zhāi.**

**chandravrata** (S), **chāndrāyaṇ(a)-vrata** (S/H), **chāndrāyaṇ(a)** (S/H), **chandrāṇā chandrāṇ brat** (Pu) *Lit.* path (*ayana*) of the moon (*chandra*) vow (*vrata*); a Hindu religious fast, a penance undertaken for the expiation of sin and/or with the intention of controlling the sense desires, extending over one lunar cycle, in which the quantity of food taken is regulated according to the waxing and waning of the moon. Beginning with fifteen mouthfuls taken at the full moon, the quantity is reduced by one mouthful per day until only one mouthful is taken at the new moon. This is again increased by one mouthful per day during the fortnight of the moon’s waxing. There are variations of the fast, some beginning the cycle with one mouthful per day at the new moon, others reducing to a complete fast on the new moon day.

According to the *Shāṇḍilya Upanishad*, *chāndrāyaṇa* is one of the austerities (*tapas*), which is itself one of the ten *niyamas* (observances), the *niyamas* being one of the eight aspects of *ashṭāṅga yoga*:

There are ten *niyamas* (observances), viz., *tapas* (austerities), *saṃtoṣa* (contentment), *āstikya* (‘belief that something exists’, i.e. faith or belief in God, the soul, etc.), *dāna* (charity), *Īshvara-pūjana* (worship of God), *siddhānta-shravaṇa* (‘enquiry into the philosophy’ of the *Vedas*), *hrī* (‘shame’ at performing wrong actions), *mati* (attitude of mind, resolve), *japa* (‘recitation’ of *mantras*), and *vrata* (‘vows’ to refrain from bad actions). Of these, *tapas* is the emancipation of the body through the observance of such penances as *kṛichchhra* (bodily mortification), *chāndrāyaṇa*, etc., according to certain rules.

*Shāṇḍilya Upanishad 1:2; cf. TMU p.132*

In the *Bhikshuka Upanishad*, *chāndrāyaṇa* is said to be practised by *haṃsas*, who, in this context, are a category of religious mendicant (*bhikshus*) distinguished by how they obtain their food, and where and how long they stay at one place:

Among *bhikshus* who long for liberation (*moksha*), there are four kinds, viz., *kuṭīchaka*, *bahūdaka*, *haṃsa*, and *paramahaṃsa*. . . . *Haṃsas* should shelter no more than one night in a village, five nights



in a town, and seven nights or more in a sacred place. Subsisting on cow's urine and other products from the cow, always observing *chāndrāyaṇa*, they strive for liberation (*moksha*) through the path of *yoga*.

*Bhikshuka Upanishad 4; cf. TMU p.101*

Mystics point out that fasting and other austerities of the body do not control the mind, nor do they lead to a realization of the Truth. Hence, Guru Arjun writes:

God is not found by intellectual devices:  
He is unknowable and unseen.  
The followers of the *khaṭ darshan* (six philosophies)  
wander and roam around wearing religious robes,  
but they do not meet God.  
They keep the lunar fasts (*chandrāṇā*),  
but they (such fasts) are of no account.  
Those who read the *Vedas* in their entirety,  
still do not see the sublime essence of Reality.

*Guru Arjun, Ādi Granth 1098–99, AGK*

See also: **tapas**.

**cháo, cháoshèng** (C) *Lit.* to make a pilgrimage (*cháo*) to a holy or sacred (*shèng*) site; to worship, to pay homage (*cháoshèng*); a shortened version of *cháobài shèngshān*, which means 'to make a pilgrimage to a holy mountain' or 'to revere a holy mountain'. Important Daoist pilgrimage destinations include the sacred mountains (*wǔyuè*) of China.

See also: **shèngdì**.

**chaplet** A string of beads or something similar used in prayer. See **rosary**.

**chāturmās(a)** (S/H) *Lit.* four (*chatur*) months (*māsa*); the four-month rainy season in India, observed by Jains and Hindus as a period of religious and spiritual refocusing; observed by Jain mendicant monks and some itinerant Hindu *sannyāsins* (renunciates) as a period when they cease travelling and reside at a fixed place. The Jain *chāturmāsa* begins on the fourteenth day of the bright half of the Hindu lunar month of *Āshāḍh* (June/July) and ends on the full-moon day of *Kārtik* (October/November). The traditional

beginning and end of the Hindu *chātur māsa* is on the eleventh day of these months. Buddhist *Theravāda* monks observe a corresponding three-month retreat, known as *vassa* (Pa. rains). The Hindu observance of *chātur māsa* probably preceded that of the Jains and Buddhists, who adapted the beliefs and practices according to their own needs. At least traditionally, business and other activities in India are reduced during the rainy season, for practical, weather-related reasons.

Insects and other invertebrates abound during the rainy season, and by remaining at one place at this time (usually in an *upāshraya* or dwelling hall, located near to a temple), Jain mendicants protect themselves from causing harm by inadvertently treading on them or breathing them in while walking. They are able to spend time with their *āchārya* (teacher), listen to his discourses (*pravachana*) in the main meeting room of the *upāshraya*, and focus upon meditation, worship, and other religious and spiritual practices.

For the Jain laity, it is a time of refocusing on their faith, when they too have the opportunity to hear daily discourses from mendicant leaders in the *upāshraya* and may feel inspired to take particular vows and undertake various practices, such as daily meditation and worship, scriptural study, *pratīkramaṇa* (confession of wrongdoing), fasting and dietary restrictions, celibacy, giving up the use of such things as shoes and tooth brushes, avoiding digging the ground (to prevent harm to small creatures), additional cleanliness of the home, and so on. Small groups of mendicants are usually invited some months in advance by a lay community to spend the rainy season in their locality.

Some itinerant Hindu *sannyāsins*, like those of the past, when travelling during the rainy season was difficult, also observe *chātur māsa* in a similar manner, passing their time with their *guru*, in meditation, and in the study of scriptures. As the *Āruṇeya Upanishad* advises:

The *yati* (ascetic) should stay at one place during the four months of the rainy season (*chātur māsa*), and during the remaining eight months wander alone or with a single companion – yes, just a single companion.

*Āruṇeya Upanishad 4; cf. MUM p.69*

It is believed that Hindu deities are resting at this time and will be angered if disturbed. Traditionally, therefore, people tend to avoid organizing major events (such as weddings, moving home, building a temple or shrine, *etc.*), for which they would normally seek the blessings of a deity. Many also adopt a vegetarian diet or impose some other dietary restriction on themselves.

*Vaishṇavas* (worshippers of the deity *Vishṇu*) believe that *Vishṇu* is engaged in deep meditation on the serpent *Ādiśeṣha* during *chātur māsa*, and they utilize the time for fasting, charitable activities, cleaning and maintenance of temples, re-reading sacred texts such as the *Mahābhārata*

and *Rāmāyaṇa*, and so on. The festival of *Janmāshṭamī* (Kṛishṇa's birthday) is also held during *chāturmāsa*.

*Shaivas* (worshippers of the deity *Shiva*) also observe *chāturmāsa*, particularly during the month of *Shrāvaṇ* (July/August), with Mondays being regarded as the most auspicious. The legend of how *Shiva* drank poison in order to prevent it from destroying all creation, and is rescued by his consort *Pārvatī*,<sup>1</sup> is especially remembered and retold at this time.<sup>2</sup>

See also: **āvashyaka, Dasha-Lakshaṇa-Parvan, varsha.**

1. *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* 8:7.18–21, 41–42, *BPT3* pp.1032, 1037; *Mahābhārata* 1, *Ādiparva* 18:42, *MRSI* p.84.
2. See “Chaturmas Vrat,” *Religious Celebrations, RCEI* pp.172–73.

**chéngfù** (C) *Lit.* to receive (*chéng*) a burden (*fù*); an inherited burden; the Daoist belief that social units (community, family, and their individual members) inherit liability for the sins (*zuì*) and wrongdoings (*guò*) of their previous lives, as well as for the sins of their ancestors. This obliges the members of each generation to pay off the inherited liability by reflecting on these sinful acts (*sīguò*), making confession to the celestial deities (*shǒuguò*), and taking responsibility on themselves (*zìzé*). The inherited ‘burdens’ include disease or a reduced lifespan for individuals, and calamities such as natural disasters, epidemics, or war among communities and the wider world.

**chillah** (P) *Lit.* a forty-day period; from *chil* or *chihal* (forty); forty-day retreat, sometimes accompanied by fasting; also, the place where a forty-day retreat is carried out; commonly practised in Sufism by a novice before his full acceptance as a disciple, and often annually thereafter, the traditional time being the Muslim month of *Dhū al-Qa’dah* plus the first ten days of *Dhū al-Hijjah*, the period being known as the forty-day retreat of Moses; also called *arba’īn*.

The forty-day retreat was traditional in the religious communities of the Middle East especially Judaism and Christianity from before the time of Islam. In Christianity, a *chillah* referred to the forty days of Lent, during which time, members of the religious fraternities of the East would remain in their cells or at home, devoting themselves to prayer and spiritual practice. Hence, a place where a Christian holy man has practised Lent was known as a *chillah-kashī* (stretching the bowstring).

The practice is mentioned in the *Qur’ān* and the *ḥadīth*:

And remember, We appointed forty nights (of seclusion) for Moses.

*Qur’ān* 2:51; cf. *AYA*

We appointed for Moses thirty nights, and completed them with ten more. Thus was completed the term (of communion) with his Lord, forty nights.

*Qur'ān 7:142; cf. AYA*

Whoever devotes himself solely to God for forty days, wellsprings of wisdom will pour forth from his heart upon his tongue.

*Ḥadīth, in Kalimāt-i Maknūnah, KMFK p.240;  
Jāmi' al-Ṣaghīr, JMH2 p.160; cf. in TPA1 (56) p.69*

Hujwīrī says that the purpose of fasting during the retreat is to “hear the Word of God” by subjecting the demands of the body:

The forty-days' fast (*chillah*) of the saints is derived from the fast of Moses. When the saints desire to hear the Word of God spiritually, they remain fasting for forty days. After thirty days have passed, they rub their teeth; then they fast ten days more, and God speaks to their hearts, because whatever the prophets enjoy openly, the saints may enjoy secretly. Now, hearing the Word of God is not compatible with the subsistence of the natural temperament; therefore the four humours must be deprived of food and drink for forty days in order that they may be utterly subdued, and that the purity of love and the subtlety of the spirit may hold absolute sway.

*Hujwīrī, Kashf al-Mahjūb XXI, KMM pp.418–19, KM p.324*

Sufis have also pointed out that the idea of seclusion is to habituate the mind to communion with the Divine, so much so that when the retreat is over, the sense of the divine presence is not lost:

Every moment for the *ṣūfī* must be like a moment in the forty days of retreat; whatever is sought at the beginning of such a retreat should be sought outside the retreat as well.

Since the wayfarer may be distracted by daily routine, however, in order to counteract this, he dedicates his time to the forty days of retreat and habituates his *nafs* (human mind) to it, such that its benefits overwhelm the rest of his life, transforming it into an ongoing forty days of retreat.

*Bākharzī, Awrād al-Aḥbāb wa Fuṣūṣ al-Ādāb, AAF2 p.291; cf. in SSE7 p.4*

A person starting a forty day retreat may begin counting off the days from the outset and, by not living in the moment and taking advantage of the solitude, will thereby lose much of the benefit of the seclusion. Najm al-Dīn Kubrā recalls that his master 'Ammār advised:

Whenever you go into retreat, do not tell yourself that you will emerge after forty days, for whoever tells himself this will have already emerged after the first day. Instead, tell yourself that the place where you sit will be your grave until the Day of Judgment.

*‘Ammār, in Fawā’ih al-Jamāl, FJF p.59, in SSE7 pp.3–4*

Like most things in life, what is gained from a retreat depends on what is put into it. In his early fourteenth-century journal, Amīr Ḥasan Sijzī writes that his master, Niẓām al-Dīn Awliyā’ once related the story of a learned young man who wanted to become a Sufi:

“There was once a spiritual master,” he recalled. “One of his sons, named Muḥammad, became extremely learned and was highly accomplished. He then resolved to pursue the path of Sufism. Coming to his father, he said: ‘I want to become a dervish.’

“‘Fine,’ said his father. ‘First go and spend forty days and nights in ascetical devotion (*chillah*).’ That son went and observed a *chillah*. When he had passed his fortieth night in prayer and solitude, he came back to his father. His father proceeded to ask him questions about what he had studied. The son answered all of them. ‘Alas, Muḥammad,’ said his father, ‘your *chillah* seems to have been useless. Go and spend another forty days and nights in ascetical devotion.’ He went and did as he had been told. After the fortieth day in prayer and solitude, he came back to his father. The father again asked him some questions. This time he began to stumble here and there in the answers that he gave. ‘Go and perform one more *chillah*,’ exhorted his father. When he had completed his third consecutive period of secluded immersion in prayer and meditation for forty days, he returned to his father. The father again put some questions to him, but this time he had become so immersed in God that he could give no reply!”

*Niẓām al-Dīn Awliyā’, Morals for the Heart 2:31, FFNA pp.137–38, MHN pp.173–74*

Sufis have not always recommended the practice. Niẓām al-Dīn Awliyā’ also relates a story told by Shaykh al-Islām Farīd al-Dīn, who had asked his master (Shaykh Quṭb al-Dīn) for permission to undertake a forty-day retreat, with fasting:

“There is no need to do this,” replied Shaykh Quṭb al-Dīn, . . . “it will give you notoriety. Moreover, no such practice has been transmitted from our masters.”

I (Shaykh al-Islām Farīd al-Dīn) replied: “The luminous moment (*waqt*) of God’s presence is upon me, and I have no intention of seeking notoriety. I will *not* do this for the notoriety of it.”

Shaykh Quṭb al-Dīn fell silent. After this, for the rest of my life,  
I was ashamed of what I had said, and I have repeatedly repented of  
my hasty, disrespectful reply.

*Niẓām al-Dīn Awliyāʾ, Morals for the Heart 1:25, FFNA p.43, MHN pp.108–9*

As many Sufis and mystics have said, the real solitude and retreat is within, and a person may be more with themselves and detached from the world while living in the midst of human activity than another who has withdrawn in retreat. As Rūmī writes in a poem concerning spiritual liberation, “We have left behind fasting and *chillah*.”<sup>1</sup> Ṣāʾib Tabrīzī says that the real retreat is in his own heart:

Look not dismissively  
into the dark inkwell of my heart:  
Joseph’s chamber of the forty-day retreat (*chillah*)  
is within my well.

*Ṣāʾib Tabrīzī, Kullīyāt, KSMN p.161; cf. in SSE7 p.5*

Ḥāfiẓ, however, leaves his meaning open. He could be referring to the inner or outer retreat, though from the general trend of his poetry, he is probably referring to the inner:

One morning a seasoned wayfarer  
kept repeating this riddle to a companion:  
“O *ṣūfī*, wine becomes pure  
when it has remained in a bottle for forty days (*arbaʿīn*).”

*Ḥāfiẓ, Dīvān, DHA p.256, DHM (549:1–2) p.490,  
DIH p.407; cf. DHWC (533:1–2) p.873*

Likewise, ʿAṭṭār could also be referring to the inner or the outer retreat:

Commit yourself to forty nights  
of retreat (*chillah*) in this sanctum,  
so as to become privy thereof,  
standing in the ranks of the pure.

*ʿAṭṭār, Dīvān, Qaṣāʾid 1:62, DASN p.3, in SSE7 p.5*

Lāhijī, on the other hand, is unequivocal:

He had no further need of retreat (*chillah*):  
no cloud remained to becloud him.

*Lāhijī, Sharḥ-i Gulshan-i Rāz, SGR p.313; cf. in SSE7 p.5*

See also: **khalwah**.

1. Rūmī, *Dīvān-i Shams-i Tabrīz* 1478:15592, *KSD3* p.226, in *TSR* p.340.

**choṭī** (H) *Lit.* top, peak; specifically, a strand of hair, regarded as sacred, left on the crown of the head by orthodox Hindu men as a mark of a householder and by which it is hoped that the soul will be pulled up to heaven at death; a symbol of the divine wisdom acquired by the soul when it reaches its journey's end and merges in the divine Source. In Punjabi, the *choṭī* is hence called the *bodhi* (wisdom).

See also: **karma-kāṇḍa**.

**Christmas** The Christian festival celebrating the birth of Jesus; also called the Nativity; generally celebrated on December 25th; a contracted form of 'Christ's Mass'; derived from the Middle English *Cristemasse*, from the Old English *Crīstesmæsse*. Religious practices are largely confined to attendance at a church service, while social festivities, some originating in pre-Christian times, include a public holiday, family gatherings, the giving of presents, and readily identifiable forms of traditional Christmas decorations, music, and cuisine.

The year of Jesus' birth, largely based upon some uncertain historical comments in Luke's gospel, is normally set at around 6 BCE, towards the end of the reign of Herod the Great. This would have put Jesus in his mid-thirties at the time of his crucifixion. But there is a passing comment attributed to the "Jews" in John's gospel, who say to Jesus, "You are not yet *fifty* years old."<sup>1</sup> It has been pointed out many times that if Jesus had been in his thirties, they would have said, "You are not yet *forty* years old." This is only one of a number of factors leading to uncertainty concerning the year of his birth.

With inaccurate and conflicting gospel information concerning the birth and early years of Jesus, it is by no means surprising to discover that no information is available regarding the actual day of the year on which he was born. The early fathers and the church in general have never made any secret of the fact. How then did December 25th come to be the date on which his birth is celebrated?

The answer seems to be associated with worship of the Roman sun god, *Sol Invictus* ('Invincible Sun'). The Emperor Aurelian (r.270–275), believing that the sun god had granted him victory over Zenobia, queen of Palmyra, built a large temple dedicated to his worship. The following year, in 274, he proclaimed *Sol Invictus* to be the universal deity of the Roman Empire.

Probably the most significant among the many religious cults in the Roman Empire at the time was that of *Mithras*, which took the ancient Aryan deity *Mithras* as its lord and saviour. The cult's custom of incorporating local deities into the identity of *Mithras* contributed greatly to its successful propagation. Mithraism had thus become widespread, especially among the Roman military forces. Unifying many of the cults associated with the numerous gods of the Graeco-Roman world, for a time it became the most important single religion in the Mediterranean world, with temples and shrines to *Mithras* also found as far afield as Britain and Germany. Already associated with the sun god, *Mithras* was regarded as synonymous with *Sol Invictus*, and by the beginning of the fourth century, *Mithras* alias *Sol Invictus* had become the pre-eminent and official deity of the Roman Empire.

Worship of *Mithras* is said to have been introduced to Rome by Pompey in the mid-first century BCE, after his conquest of Pontus. Pontus was an influential city on the Black Sea, at that time controlling all of Asia Minor under the rule of Mithradatēs VI. Carried over from his Aryan roots, *Mithras* appears as a minor deity in the Hindu *Vedas*, but in Persia the deity grew in importance, becoming chief of the powers subordinate to the Zoroastrian *Ormazd* (*Ahura Mazdā*). It was as this powerful deity that Mithraism flourished in the Roman Empire, enjoying a new lease of life in early Christian times.

Mithraism was therefore one of early Christianity's main rivals in the Roman Empire, and an annual festival in honour of the 'Birthday of *Sol Invictus*' was held on the festival of the winter solstice, December 25th in the Julian calendar. It was an event of great importance in the Roman world, marked by general festivities including the Great Games. Naturally, the day was a public holiday and it is probable that, for practical reasons, this was the day chosen as the date on which Jesus' birthday should also be celebrated. The probability, however, is by no means certain, and there are other opinions on the matter.

It appears likely, however, that the date on which the Nativity was celebrated was not fixed until the mid-fourth century, for it does not appear in the list of Christian feasts given by the late second- and early third-century fathers, Tertullian (c. 160–220) and Origen.<sup>2</sup> In fact, late in the second century, Clement of Alexandria, speaking of speculations concerning the birth date of Christ, condemns them as superstition. And in 345, when the idea of fixing a day for celebrations must have been under review, Origen opposed the very idea of commemorating the birthday of Jesus.

Speaking of ancient holy men and prophets such as Jeremiah as the "saints", Origen points out that "not one from all the saints is found to have celebrated a festive day or a great feast on the day of his birth." In fact, he observes that Jeremiah said, "Cursed be the day in which I was born." Origen comments that the prophet would not have said such things "unless he knew that there was something in this bodily birth that would seem worthy of



such curses". For a mystic to leave the blissful realms and to enter a "bodily birth" with its multifarious vicissitudes is indeed a "curse", though mystics make such comments in order to awaken human beings to their predicament, not because they themselves are dissatisfied with the divine will. Origen also says, "only sinners rejoice over this kind of birthday," adding that the celebration of birthdays is characteristic of rulers such as Pharaoh and Herod who celebrated their respective birthdays with festivities and by taking the lives of others.<sup>3</sup>

Both Clement and Origen are saying that what was important in Jesus' life was his teachings and the example of his life. To give importance to the day of his birth was to demean the very purpose for which he came into this world. But following the inevitable pathway of decline, the counsel of these early fathers was neglected.

The first verifiable mention of December 25th as the birth date of Jesus appears at the head of the *Depositio Martyrum* in a Roman chronography (a Christian almanac) dated 354,<sup>4</sup> but probably drawn up in 336, since the *Depositio Martyrum* lists no martyrs later than that year. This list of Christian martyrs begins with an entry for December 25th, "Christ born in Bethlehem of Judaea". The date of Christmas can thus be dated to at least as far back as 336, though only the date is listed, no festal celebrations being mentioned. This fits tolerably well with a comment made by John Chrysostom (c.345–407), who – in the long title to a homily delivered at Antioch on the feast day of the Blessed Philogonius (December 20th), possibly in 386 – mentions that the Nativity will be celebrated in five days' time.<sup>5</sup> At about the same time, he also writes that the day had only "lately" been fixed by the church authorities, in order to coincide with the Roman public holiday:

On this day also the birthday of Christ was lately fixed at Rome in order that whilst the heathen were busied with their profane ceremonies, the Christians might perform their holy rites undisturbed.

*John Chrysostom, Homily XXXI, in GTR p.49*

Whether the festivities as practised in modern times, including the slaughter of millions of birds and animals, together with the consumption of large quantities of alcohol, are any less "profane" is debatable. Even the Great Games of the Romans are mirrored in the numerous worldwide sporting fixtures of Boxing Day.

The Christmas tree, too, may owe its origins to the ancient Persian god. More than a millennium before the Caesars, the mysteries of *Mithras* were celebrated in Asia Minor in conjunction with those of the goddess *Cybele*. Here, *Mithras* appears bearing a ball in one hand and leaning on a fir tree, a tree into which he had been transformed for his infidelity to the goddess and which remained associated with his cult.

The Christmas tree was introduced into Britain from Germany where Mithraism had been more popular than in any other Western country in Roman times, and it has been conjectured that these customs may in some way be connected.<sup>6</sup> Another theory suggests that the Christmas tree is derived from the Paradise Tree, which – in an ancient custom – was adorned with apples on December 24th in honour of Adam and Eve. The more likely theory, however, is that it owes its origins to the pagan Yule tree.

Yuletide was the Germano-Celtic festival associated with the winter solstice, an understandably important time in ancient European cultures, where the winters can be harsh, and a number of traditional Christmas social customs are derived from earlier ‘pagan’ practices. At the ancient Roman New Year festival, held on January 1st, houses were decorated with greenery and lights, while presents were given to children and to the poor. Likewise, Germanic Yuletide traditions included good fellowship, feasting, particular foods such as Yule cakes, lights, fires, the Yule log, greenery and fir trees, together with the exchange of gifts and greetings. In the eighth century, during Boniface’s missionary activities among the Germanic tribes, he dedicated the fir tree to the ‘Holy Child’ to replace the sacred oak of Odin. It is from these customs, adapted to modern times, that most of the social traditions of Christmas are descended.

Because of these acknowledged pagan origins, in 1644, the English Puritans banned all such Christmas festivities by Act of Parliament, ordering that the day be kept as a fast. Charles II, however, reintroduced the festivities after the Restoration of the monarchy (1660), although the Scots at that time continued to adhere to the Puritan view. In the United States, too, festal celebrations were suppressed because of their pagan origins and it is only since the nineteenth century that they have become increasingly popular and commercialized.<sup>7</sup>

See also: **Advent, virgin birth.**

1. *John* 8:57.
2. Tertullian, *De Baptismo* 29, *WTI* p.254; Origen, *Against Celsus* 8:22, *OCC* p.468.
3. See Origen, *Commentary on Leviticus* 8:2ff., *OHL* pp.156–57; cf. *Jeremiah* 20:14–16, *Genesis* 40:20–22 (on Pharaoh), *Mark* 6:21–27 (on Herod).
4. *Depositio Martyrum* 2:17, *DMVZ*.
5. John Chrysostom, *Concerning Blessed Philogonius*, *PG*48 cols.747, 752.
6. See E. Wynne-Tyson, *Mithras*, *MFC* p.55.
7. Much material in this entry is drawn from John Davidson, *The Gospel of Jesus*, *GJ* pp.129–33; see also Antonia Tripolitis, *Religions of the Hellenistic-Roman Age*, *RHRT* pp.56–59.

**chúgǒu** (C) *Lit.* hay, straw (*chú*) + dogs (*gǒu*); straw dogs; effigies made of straw and used in ancient times as offerings during sacrifices and religious festivals, to draw away evil influences. At the end of a ritual, the straw dogs were discarded, either by burning or throwing on the ground, symbolizing death and the transience of life.

The ritual is mentioned in the *Zhuāngzǐ* (c.C3rd BCE):

Before the straw dogs (*chúgǒu*) are presented at the sacrifice, they are stored in bamboo boxes and covered over with patterned embroidery, while the impersonator of the dead and the priest fast and practise austerities in preparation for fetching them (the straw dogs). But after they have once been presented, then all that remains for them is to be trampled on, head and back, by passers-by; to be swept up by the grass cutters and burned. And if anyone should come along and put them back in their bamboo boxes, cover them over with patterned embroidery, and linger or lie down to sleep beneath them, he would dream no proper dreams; on the contrary, he would most certainly be visited again and again by nightmares.

*Zhuāngzǐ* 14, CTW pp.158–59

The term first appears in the *Dàodé jīng* (c.C3rd BCE), where it is used to symbolize the transient nature of creation and human life. Lǎozǐ likens the sage's attitude to that of "heaven and earth" (*i.e.* the creative power in nature), since neither nature nor the sage is attached to the transience of life:

Heaven and earth are impartial (*bùrén*)  
and treat the creation like straw dogs (*chúgǒu*).  
(Likewise) the sage is impartial (*bùrén*):  
he treats everyone like straw dogs (*chúgǒu*).

*Dàodé jīng* 5

*Bùrén*, translated here as 'impartial', literally means 'without (*bù*) humanity (*rén*)', but that does not capture the compassion of a sage, which is universal because it is detached, impartial, and not based on sentimentality. As an enlightened teacher, the sage is concerned only with the spirit, and acts naturally, not discriminating on the basis of an individual's physical body, personality or circumstances, which are all transient.

**confession** In Judaism and Christianity, a private or public acknowledgment of sinfulness; in Catholic and Orthodox Christianity, the confession of sins to a priest (a confessor) who hears confessions, sets penances, grants absolution

of sins, and who may also act as a spiritual adviser or director. The sacrament of confession is also known as ‘penance’.

Human beings are able to discriminate between right and wrong. That being so, an awareness of sinfulness and a consequent uneasy sense of guilt when doing wrong are natural companions to the human conscience. It is for this reason that rites of atonement are found in most of the world’s religions. Probably all the world’s religious and spiritual traditions, ancient and more recent, contain prayers and songs in which devotees confess their sinfulness before God.

In early Judaism, the many animal sacrifices made at the Temple in Jerusalem were intended to invoke forgiveness or atonement of sins.<sup>1</sup> On *Yom Kippur* (Day of Atonement), these sacrificial sin offerings were preceded by a general confession of sinfulness.<sup>2</sup> Since the destruction of the Temple by the Romans in 70 CE, *Yom Kippur* has remained a day of prayer and fasting, when prayers of penitence and general confession of sinfulness are recited in the synagogue throughout the day. Public confession of sins is also mentioned in *Leviticus* and *Nehemiah*.<sup>3</sup>

Part of the mission of the biblical prophets, who were not always in agreement with sacrificial practice,<sup>4</sup> was to awaken people to a sense of their sinfulness. Baruch, Jeremiah, Ezra, Hosea, Joshua, Daniel and others, all speak of an introspective confession or acknowledgment of sin before God.<sup>5</sup>

Biblical texts, especially the devotional and wisdom literature, commonly speak of making a personal and private confession of sins before God. For instance:

At last I admitted to You I had sinned,  
no longer concealing my guilt;  
I said “I will go to *Yahweh* and confess my fault.”  
And You, You have forgiven the wrong I did,  
have pardoned my sin.

*Psalms 32:5, JB*

Do not be ashamed to confess your sins,  
do not strive against the current of a river.

*Wisdom of Jesus ben Sirach 4:26, JB*

He who conceals his faults will not prosper,  
he who confesses and renounces them will find mercy.

*Proverbs 28:13, JB*

In the Christian gospels, *Mark* (followed by *Matthew*) relates (with uncertain historical authenticity) that in the time of John the Baptist many “were baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins”.<sup>6</sup> Elsewhere in

the New Testament, references to confession are few. Jesus himself makes no mention of confession *per se*, though it is clear from his teachings that he intended his disciples to seek awareness of their imperfections. Among the various epistles, James the brother of Jesus writes in a general way:

Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that you may be healed.

*James 5:16; cf. KJV*

And the writer of *1 John* points out:

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

*1 John 1:8–9, KJV*

But there is no evidence here that the practice was in any way formalized, nor does it seem to be a fundamental aspect of Paul's teachings. Rather, it seems to have been more of an appeal for a general acknowledgment and awareness of sinfulness, something that spiritual teachers have always advocated.

Detailed and formalized confession to a priest first appeared four centuries after Jesus. At this time, it was the practice to hear confessions at the beginning of Lent, and for penitents to be absolved, reconciled or forgiven on Holy Thursday. Gradually, however, it became the custom to absolve penitents immediately after confession, before penance had been enacted, and by the eleventh century, only serious sinners were absolved on Holy Thursday. To prevent seasoned and unabashed sinners from taking advantage of the system by awaiting the approach of death before confession and absolution, the fourth Lateran Council (1215) decreed that confession should be made to a priest at least once a year.

Since medieval times, the Catholic and Orthodox churches have taught that penance is a sacrament, and that the confession of all significant sins committed since baptism, when all prior sins are forgiven, is necessary for absolution.

During the Reformation, because the practice had become corrupt and people could even buy penances, the dissenting groups largely abandoned the practice of confession. John Calvin (1509–1564), one of the foremost leaders of the Reformation, acknowledged the psychological benefits of confession to those of troubled conscience, but did not accept confession as a sacrament, nor as necessary for the divine forgiveness of sins.

Most modern Protestant groups believe there to be no biblical support for confession to be viewed as a sacrament. Although public confession of personal sins is an integral part of some Pentecostal and Fundamentalist worship, most Protestant churches consider the absolution of the communion

service and the general confession of sins declared collectively by the whole congregation (as in the *Book of Common Prayer*, for example) to be sufficient. Forgiveness is understood to be by divine prerogative, and is not available simply by the asking.

Many Catholic writers have given advice on the most effective way to make confession. François de Sales counsels a beginner:

Purification from mortal sin is the first step, and the sacrament of penance is the means of effecting it. Seek the best confessor you can; make use of some book designed to help us to make a good confession. . . . Go through it carefully, noting, point by point, where you have offended from the time you came to the use of reason up to the present, writing it down if you distrust your memory.

Having discovered and noted the sins which beset your conscience, detest them and renounce them with all the sorrow and contrition in your heart, remembering these four points: that by sin you have lost the grace of God; that you have forfeited your place in heaven; that you have deserved the eternal suffering of hell, and that you have renounced the eternal love of God.

*François de Sales, Devout Life 1:6, IDL pp.19–20*

Go to confession every week, humbly and devoutly, and always, if possible, before going to communion, even though you may not have any mortal sins on your conscience; for confession not only absolves venial sins but also strengthens you to avoid falling into the same sins again, enlightens you to recognize them more clearly and repairs the damage they may have caused. You will be practising humility, obedience, simplicity and charity, in fact more virtues than in any other single act.

Be sincerely sorry for the sins you confess, however slight, firmly resolving to avoid them in future. Those who make a habit of confessing their venial sins without thought of amendment remain under the weight of them all their life to the detriment of their spiritual advancement. If you confess a lie which harmed no one, that you have said something out of place or given too much time to amusements, be genuinely sorry and make a firm promise of amendment, for it is an abuse to confess any kind of sin, mortal or venial, unless you will to be freed from it, for that is the very purpose of confession.

Avoid vague accusations such as “I have not loved God as much as I ought;” “I have not prayed enough;” “I have been lacking in reverence in receiving the sacraments,” and so on; for such accusations convey nothing to your confessor as to the state of your soul; there is no saint in heaven and no one on earth who could not say exactly the same. . . .

Do not be content with confessing the mere facts of your venial sins, but also the motive for which they were committed, for example, do not just say that you have told a harmless lie but that you did so to put yourself in a good light, to make an excuse for yourself, from obstinacy or just for fun. If you cheated in some game, say why: perhaps from a desire to win, and so on. Confess also how long you continued in your sin because this normally increases its gravity, there obviously being a great difference between a passing vanity which lingered in your heart for a mere quarter of an hour, and one which remained for several days.

You must, then, confess the act itself, its motive and its duration, for though you are not bound to be scrupulous in confessing venial sins, in fact not strictly bound to confess them at all, yet if you really wish to purify your soul and become devout you should be careful in making known to your spiritual physician the exact nature of your sin. If you have given way to anger, for example, say why. Suppose you took a joke in bad part because you disliked the person concerned when you would have accepted it from a friend; in this case you would say in confession, "I was angry with someone because I took something he said in bad part but only because I dislike him." It may be as well to repeat the actual words, if that is necessary to make your meaning clear. By accusing yourself in this way, you not only make known your sins but also your evil inclinations, customs and habits, and the very roots of your sin, enabling your confessor to understand your heart better and apply the best remedies. Remember that, as far as possible, you must never disclose the identity of anyone who may have shared in your sin. Beware of those sins which often live and flourish unnoticed in your conscience so that you may confess them and be cleansed of them.

Do not be too ready to change your confessor, but keep to the same one; go to him regularly and confess your sins quite candidly and sincerely. Every month or so reveal your inclinations, apart from any sin; in fact, for example, that you were troubled by sadness, felt joyful or avaricious, and so on.

*François de Sales, Devout Life 2:19, IDL pp.79–81*

He also suggests the best attitude with which to approach confession:

Sin is shameful at the time but when repented and confessed it serves for our salvation, while repentance and confession are so beautiful and fragrant as to banish the ugliness and stench of sin. Simon the Leper despised Mary Magdalene as a sinner, but our Lord spoke only of the greatness of her love and of the perfume which she emptied out for him. If we are truly humble, . . . our sins will certainly displease us

because they offend God, yet to confess them will be a joy, because confession honours God, while the very fact of revealing our ailments to our physician is a relief in itself.

Kneel in the confessional as though on Mount Calvary at the feet of Christ crucified, whose precious blood washes away your sins, for it is in truth that very blood which has purchased the pardon which we obtain. Open your whole heart that all your sins may depart, and that the graces purchased by the Passion may flow in to take their place. Reveal everything that is on your conscience simply and sincerely, then listen to your confessor's advice.

*François de Sales, Devout Life 1:19, IDL pp.40–41*

He observes that unloading one's troubles to another brings relief:

Never allow desires, however trivial, to disquiet you, for that would only leave you with less resistance to the clamour of greater ones. When you experience disquiet, turn to God and resolve not to do what you desire until the disquiet has passed, unless it is something which cannot be deferred, in which case you must restrain, control and moderate your desire as far as possible with gentleness and tranquillity, acting according to reason, not mere inclination. If you can make known your disquietude to your confessor, or at least to some good and faithful friend, be assured that you will at once find relief, for to reveal the sufferings of our heart has the same effect on the soul as blood-letting in the case of someone suffering from chronic fever. . . . It is the best of all remedies. As St Louis advised his son: "If any trouble afflicts your heart, make it known at once to some good friend, and the strength you will gain from this will enable you to bear your trouble easily."

*François de Sales, Devout Life 4:11, IDL p.220*

The Christian understanding and perspectives on confession are highlighted by some of their written observations. Confession can be both positive or negative:

Confession takes two forms. According to the one, we give thanks for blessings received; according to the other, we bring to light and examine what we have done wrong. We use the term confession both for the grateful appreciation of the blessings we have received through divine favour, and for the admission of the evil actions of which we are guilty. Both forms produce humility. For he who thanks God for blessings and he who examines himself for his offences are both



humbled. The first judges himself unworthy of what he has been given; the second implores forgiveness for his sins.

*Maximos the Confessor, On Theology 3:63, Philokalia, PCT2 p.226*

Confession, together with unceasing prayer, is regarded as a remedy for temptation and negative thoughts:

When you are tortured with trouble or temptation, make frequent use of confession as well as prayer: in this you will show your confessor, with full contrition of your heart, completely and honestly, all the wounds of your conscience, great and small. . . . This is a sovereign medicine for getting rid of temptations and troubles and obtaining the great grace of God's comfort, because the devil (being full of pride) cannot bear the meekness of pure confession, nor the fervour of perpetual prayer.

*Walter Hilton, Perfection 2, PAS pp.3–4*

Just as darkness recedes when light shines, so the light of confession dispels the darkness of impassioned thoughts. The vanity and self-indulgence that provided an opening for such thoughts are destroyed by the shame felt in confessing them and by the hardship of the penance imposed. Evil thoughts flee in confusion when they find the mind already free from passions as a result of continuous, truly contrite prayer.

*Theoliptos, On Inner Work, Philokalia, PCT4 p.186*

Confession helps to keep the mind in check:

Confession is like a bridle that keeps the soul which reflects on it from committing sin, but anything left unconfessed we continue to do without fear as if in the dark.

*John Klimakos, Ladder of Ascent 4, LDAC p.107*

Since – according to Christian belief – all sins are forgiven after confession and absolution, the soul leaves the confessional in a state of purity:

Immediately after confession a soul is like a clean page. It is ready to receive whatever anyone wishes to write on it. God and his angels on the one side, the devil and his angels on the other: both are eager to write upon the soul when it is made clean by confession. But it remains within the free choice of the soul to accept what impression it prefers.

*Anon., Discernment of Spirits 12, PWOW p.114*

Even so, the human mind does not become inactive during confession, and confession itself can become a source of pride:

There is a kind of confession all the more calamitous for its subtle concealment of vanity, as when we unhesitatingly reveal our ugly or immoral behaviour, not because we are humble, but because we want to appear so. But to seek praise for humility is to destroy the virtue in it.

*Bernard of Clairvaux, On the Song of Songs 16:6.10, WBC1 p.121*

Moreover, excessive zeal and self-absorption can lead to thinking obsessively about one's next confession:

All who are excessively zealous in confession should heed the advice of a holy man who once told a scrupulous person never to think about confession except during the time allotted for examination of conscience, which time should correspond to your circumstances. If you confess daily, or almost each day, you need no more time than is required to recite the (short) psalm "*Miserere mei, Deus!* (Have mercy on me, O Lord!)," <sup>7</sup> which we should be careful to remember. If you remember another sin either before or after this period, defer it until your next time for examination; do not be concerned about it but simply tell it to return at the appropriate moment. For if you do not follow this advice, the devil will never tire of troubling your imagination, even with what you have confessed very well and, in fact, he may lead you to believe that you have not yet done so. If you limit your time, however, the devil cannot harm you so severely.

*Francisco de Osuna, Third Spiritual Alphabet 7:8, TSAO p.201*

Confession as a means of obtaining forgiveness of sins is a peculiarly Christian tradition, founded upon the belief that Jesus' suffering on the cross was atonement for all human beings who 'believed'. Yet the process presupposes a Deity who functions according to anthropomorphic principles and that the ways of the Divine are open to normal human awareness and understanding. Considered objectively, it would seem to be more a matter of doctrine, belief and wishful thinking that penance and the blessing of a confessor can automatically invoke divine forgiveness and the consequent clearing of the influences of past thought and action upon the mind.

See also: **absolution** (►4), **confessor** (7.1), **forgiveness of sins** (►4), **penance**, **teshuvah** (►4).

1. *E.g. Numbers* 28:15, 22, 30, 29:5, 11, 16, 19, 22, 25, 28, 31 34, 38.
2. *Leviticus* 15:21; see also *Leviticus* 26:40.

3. *Leviticus* 5:5; *Nehemiah* 1:6, 9:2–3.
4. E.g. *Hosea* 6:6; cf. *Matthew* 9:13.
5. *Baruch* 1:14; *Daniel* 9:4, 20; *Ezra* 10:1, 11; *Hosea* 5:15; *Jeremiah* 14:20; *Joshua* 7:19.
6. *Mark* 1:5; cf. *Matthew* 3:6, *KJV*.
7. *Psalms* 6:2, *KJV*.

**convent** From the Latin *conventus* (assembly, meeting, company); the residence of a religious community under monastic vows, especially of nuns, living in greater or lesser seclusion from secular society, and bound by the rule of their particular order; the community inhabiting such a residence.

See also: **monasticism**.

**cross** An ancient and widespread symbol, long predating Christianity, often possessing religious significance, consisting of an upright intersected by a transversal; the principal symbol of Christianity, as a reminder of the salvation given by Jesus, who, by his death and suffering on the cross, is believed to have taken upon himself the sins of the world; a symbol of both Christ, the divine Word, and the Christian faith. The ‘sign of the cross’ is a gesture in which the form of a cross is outlined by the right hand moving from the forehead to the breast, and from shoulder to shoulder. It is used ceremonially to invoke the grace of Christ in conjunction with a profession of faith, a prayer, a dedication or a benediction or, in a more social context, when seeking personal protection.

Representations of the Christian cross are based on four basic types: the *crux quadrata* (L. square cross) or Greek cross, which has four equal arms; the *crux immissa* or Latin cross, the form of the cross in the Latin West tradition, with the lower upright longer than the other three arms; the *crux commissa* or St Anthony’s cross, formed like the Greek letter *tau* (T); and the *crux decussata* or St Andrew’s cross (X), from the Latin *decussis*, the symbol for the numeral 10. Christian art and design has created many ornate elaborations of these four types. Traditionally, Jesus is generally portrayed as having died on the *crux immissa*, though some believe it was a *crux commissa*.

The earliest-known cross as a religious icon is the swastika (S. *svastika*; from *svasti*, prosperity) of India, used by Hindus, Buddhists and Jains as an auspicious symbol of prosperity and good fortune. In Buddhism, the cross also represents the feet or footprints of the Buddha. Through Buddhist influence, the use of the swastika has spread to China and Japan.

In Christianity, the *crux gammata* or gammadion cross, because it can be formed from four Greek capital *gammata* (Γ), is used on many early Christian

tombs, as a veiled symbol of the cross. This cross has the appearance of a swastika and is similar to the Greek *tetraskelion*, though it is uncertain whether the resemblance of the swastika to the *crux gammata* and *tetraskelion* is anything more than coincidental or adoption by familiarity. Swastika-like designs are also found among the native American cultures, such as the Navajo and the Maya. Of an antiquity similar to the *crux gammata* is the ancient Egyptian hieroglyph, the ankh (⦿), which was formed like a *tau* cross with a loop on the top. Known as the *crux ansata* it was adopted and used extensively in Coptic Christianity.

Early Christians, fearing ridicule or persecution, used the cross sparingly. But after the patronage of Christianity by Emperor Constantine in the early fourth century CE, the cross began to figure widely in Christian art and funerary ornamentation.<sup>1</sup>

According to legend, Helena, the mother of Constantine, on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land in 326, discovered the actual cross upon which Jesus had been crucified. Adoration of this 'True Cross' resulted in a burgeoning market for its fragments, which found their way as holy relics into reliquaries in most of the great cities and abbeys of medieval Christendom. By the sixteenth century, the extent of the practice prompted the reformist John Calvin to observe that there were sufficient fragments of the 'true cross' to fill a large ship. Some Catholic theologians maintained that the blood of Christ bestowed a kind of material imperishability upon the cross, allowing it to be divided indefinitely without loss.<sup>2</sup>

As a metaphor and symbol, the cross was used in a number of associated ways by Jesus and the early Christians. Jesus uses the expression "taking up the cross" to symbolize following the spiritual path he laid down. According to *Matthew*, Jesus says:

If any man will come after me, let him deny himself,  
and take up his cross, and follow me.  
For whoever would save his life will lose it:  
and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.  
For how does it profit a man,  
if he gains the whole world, but loses his life?  
For what can a man give in exchange for his life?

*Matthew 16:24–26; cf. KJV*

And at another place, Jesus adds:

He that does not take up his cross and follow after me  
is not worthy of me.

*Matthew 10:38; cf. KJV*

Since Jesus was alive at the time, any relationship of the expression to his impending crucifixion would have been lost on his disciples, and is unlikely to have had anything to do with his meaning. Moreover, in *Luke*, he speaks of taking up the cross “daily”.<sup>3</sup> Spiritually speaking, to “take up the cross” is to accept the way of life of a disciple, to learn to die to the world.

Crucifixion was a common form of execution utilized by the Romans. Even mass executions were performed by this means. Crucifixion would have conjured up images of a slow and lingering death, something that would have preyed upon the minds of many in those violent times. Since the spiritual path is also that of going through the process of death while still living in the body, the cross perhaps represented the slow and difficult practice of withdrawing the consciousness from the body during daily spiritual practice.

Jesus underlines his meaning when he adds, enigmatically, that whoever “loses his life for my sake”, whoever “takes up his cross daily”, who learns to die while living and who completely dedicates his life to following the spiritual path, “will find it”. He will find the life of eternity. Conversely, whoever tries to avoid the process of dying while living and of dedicating himself to the spiritual path will end up losing his life. He will lose the opportunity of realizing eternal life, and will live life as one who is spiritually dead. Jesus emphasizes his point when he concludes:

For how does it profit a man,  
if he gains the whole world, but loses his life?  
For what can a man give in exchange for his life?

*Matthew 16:26; cf. KJV*

“Taking up the cross” and “losing his life for my sake” are thus firmly equated with gaining the soul. Nothing of this world, he says, is worth exchanging for the bliss and peace of eternity.

Christian interpretations of “taking up the cross” generally centre around the cross as representing self-denial and renunciation, together with the positive effort required to live a pure life;<sup>4</sup> or as the burden and suffering of sin and self;<sup>5</sup> or either as gladly embracing or simply enduring the tribulations of life,<sup>6</sup> as in the expression, “We all have crosses to bear.”

In the years following the crucifixion, the cross, according to St Paul, loomed as an obstacle for many would-be converts, both Jew and Gentile, “unto Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness”.<sup>7</sup> To the Jews, any claims to messiahship were negated by Jesus’ ignominious death, and the passage in *Deuteronomy*:

And if a man has committed a crime punishable by death and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, his body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but you shall bury him the same day, for a hanged

man is accursed by God; you shall not defile your land which the Lord your God gives you for an inheritance.

*Deuteronomy 21: 22–23, KJV*

Yet Paul, who had persecuted the followers of Christ, came to regard the cross as the means by which Jesus freed everyone from the bonds of the Mosaic law and from the tyranny of death. As Paul developed his theology, the cross became the symbol, the cornerstone, and the focus of the new Christian religion.

In the allegorical mindset of early Christian times, the cross is again imbued with symbolic meaning. Clues concerning this understanding are found in a long passage in the *Acts of Peter* where the cross is not only depicted as a symbol of the spiritual life, but is also given a detailed allegorical and mystical interpretation. According to the story, Peter is being crucified when he explains:

What else is Christ but the Word, the Sound of God?  
 For the Word is the upright beam upon which I am crucified.  
 And the Sound is that which crosses it, the nature of man.  
 And the nail that holds the cross-tree to the middle of the upright  
 is the conversion and repentance of man.

*Acts of Peter XXXVIII; cf. ANT p.335*

First of all, he is explicit that the real Christ is the “Word, the Sound of God”. Being crucified was also known colloquially as being ‘hung on the tree’, an idiom that lent itself naturally to those conversant with the mystic path, for the Word was also known as the Tree of Life. Peter therefore says that the Word is the main trunk of the cross. It is the Tree of Life; and the branch that “crosses it” represents the true “nature of man” – his soul. He is a branch of the Tree of Life: his reality is that of the divine Sound.

The “nail that holds the cross-tree to the middle of the upright is the conversion and repentance of man.” The nail represents the single eye, the eye centre, the focus of mind and soul in a human being, from which a person can either descend into the world or can ‘repent’, can be ‘converted’, and can turn again towards God.

The cross, therefore, had a number of interrelated and symbolic meanings. It represented the Tree of Life, the soul of man, the point of ‘intersection’ where man is able to repent or turn to God – and it also symbolized the process of dying while living. The vertical axis of the human body is the main upright of the cross; it is man’s essential life force, the living Word. The horizontal branch crosses this main axis at the single eye, the focus of the soul and mind in the human form. So to “take up the cross” means to repent, to withdraw all consciousness to this point, and to die while living.

Peter continues:

Whereas you have made known  
 and revealed these things to me, O Word,  
 called now by me the Tree of Life –  
 I thank you, not with these lips, ...  
 nor with this tongue by which truth and falsehood issue forth;  
 Nor with this word which comes forth  
 by means of art whose nature is material.

But with that Voice do I thank you, O King,  
 which is perceived in silence,  
 which is not heard openly,  
 which proceeds not from organs of the body,  
 which goes not into ears of flesh,  
 which is not heard of corruptible substance,  
 which exists not in the world,  
 neither is sent forth upon earth, nor written in books,  
 nor is owned by one and not by another:

With this, O Jesus Christ, do I thank you,  
 with the silence of a Voice,  
 wherewith the spirit that is in me loves you,  
 speaks to you, sees you, and beseeches you.  
 You are perceived by the spirit only.

*Acts of Peter XXXIX; cf. ANT p.335*

Peter speaks of the Word as the Tree of Life, explaining that the thanks and worship and praise that he gives to Jesus come – not from his material tongue – but from the spirit within that hears the Voice or divine Sound. For, he adds, the real form of Jesus was not the physical body, but the Spirit or Word within.

In the *Acts of Andrew*, the term ‘Tree of Life’ is used somewhat similarly to the passage in the *Acts of Peter*. Here again, the cross is the life-giving Tree that has been “planted on earth” to “draw up those that are on earth”. Here also there is an early example of the traditional Christian belief in the power of the cross to ward off evil. Interpreted mystically, this makes sense, for the cross represented the Word, which alone has the power to overcome the ‘devil’, the source of all evil:

I come to you, O Cross, whom I know now to be mine; ...  
 I know your mystery, why you have been planted:  
 for you were planted in the world to secure things unstable.

O Cross that is pure, radiant, full of life and light,  
receive me, I who have been weary for so long.

Your head stretches up to heaven,  
representing the heavenly *Logos*, head of all things.  
Your middle part is stretched out,  
on the right hand and on the left,  
to put to flight the envious  
and hostile power of the Evil One,  
that you may gather together into one,  
those who are scattered abroad. . . .

Your foot is planted on earth, set securely in the depth,  
that you may draw up those that are on earth  
and beneath the earth, and unite them with those in heaven.

O Cross, engine of salvation, most skilfully devised,  
given by the Most High;  
O Cross, invincible trophy of Christ's conquest of the enemies;  
O Cross, life-giving Tree, planted on earth,  
with your fruits in heaven; . . .  
O Cross most venerable, sweet thing and sweet Name; . . .  
O Cross, who clothed yourself with the Lord.

*Acts of Andrew 54; cf. ANT pp.359–60, ANTE p.262, FFF pp.445–46*

There are other references in the ancient literature to the cross as a mystic metaphor, especially as the Tree of Life or divine Word.<sup>8</sup> As Ephraim Syrus says:

The Tree of Life is the Cross  
which gave a radiant life to our race.

*Ephraim Syrus, ESHS4 col.769.2, in MEM p.126*

Similar imagery is also found among the Manichaean texts, which refer to the “Cross of Light”, once again a metaphor for the divine Word or Tree of Life.<sup>9</sup> One of the Coptic psalmists writes:

The Cross of Light that gives life to the universe,  
I have known it and believed in it;  
For it is my dear soul, which nourishes every man,  
at which the blind are offended because they know it not.

*Manichaean Psalm Book CCLXVIII, MPB p.86*

The writer says that he or she has “known it” – experienced it. It is within the soul itself, and “nourishes every man” – it is the Power that gives life to



all. But the spiritually “blind” people of the world are disturbed when they hear about it, because it is beyond their comprehension and challenges their material tendencies and dogmatic beliefs.

Another of these psalms brings together the symbol of the Cross and the common Manichaean metaphor of the ‘ships of light’, piloted by the saviour, carrying souls from this world to eternity:

You made the Cross a ship for yourself,  
you were the sailor on it.  
The Cross was a ship, the souls were passengers.

*Manichaean Psalm Book; cf. MPB p.123*

See also: **swastika**.

1. See “cross,” *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 2001.
2. See “true cross,” *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 2001.
3. *Luke 9:23, KJV*.
4. *E.g. François de Sales, Love of God 9:2, LGFS p.360.*
5. *E.g. Book of Privy Counselling 8, CUCW pp.184–85.*
6. *E.g. Thomas à Kempis, Imitation of Christ 2:12.*
7. *1 Corinthians 1:23, KJV.*
8. *E.g. Acts of John 98, ANT p.254.*
9. See especially *Kephalaia*, *passim*.

**crucifixion** See **cross**.

**Daihannya kuyō** (J) *Lit.* great (*dai*) wisdom (*hannya*) ceremony (*kuyō*), *hannya* being a phonetic rendering of the Sanskrit *prajñā* (wisdom); a ceremony held by Zen Buddhist communities in honour of and reverence for the extensive *Daihannya haramitta Kyō* (‘Great Perfection of Wisdom *Sūtra*’; C. *Dà bōrěluómìduō jīng*; S. *Mahāprajñāpāramitā Sūtra*), commonly abbreviated to *Daihannya Kyō* (C. *Dà bānrùò jīng*). A recitation of the *Daihannya Kyō* (generally only of the titles of its *sūtras* and chapters, while flipping through the pages of the entire text) is known as a *Daihannya tendoku* (‘opening the scrolls of the *Daihannya*’).

The *Mahāprajñāpāramitā Sūtra*, originally written in Sanskrit, consists of six hundred fascicles or chapters containing 200,000 *ślokas* in verse and an equivalent number of syllables in prose. The text is comprised of sixteen *sūtras*, of varying length, which had previously circulated separately. They expound the teaching of *prajñāpāramitā* (perfection of wisdom), especially as it relates to the wisdom of understanding *śūnyatā* (J. *kū*, void, emptiness) as the nature of Reality and the attendant illusory nature of all phenomena.

The *Mahāprajñāpāramitā Sūtra* has become a primary source of East Asian *Mahāyāna* teachings in China and Japan.

Three copies of the original Sanskrit were brought back to China by the scholar, traveller and Buddhist monk Xuánzàng, after an extensive seventeen-year, overland journey to India from which he returned with over 650 Sanskrit manuscripts. In 659 CE, with the help of a team, Xuánzàng set about translating the *Mahāprajñāpāramitā Sūtra* into Chinese, referring to all three texts in the attempt to resolve variations between them. There are a number of other *sūtras* of the *prajñāpāramitā* genre, dating back to probably the first century CE, some of which – like the very short (sixteen sentences) and popular *Prajñāpāramitā-hṛidaya Sūtra* (‘Heart of the Perfection of Wisdom *Sūtra*’ or ‘Heart *Sūtra*’) and the well-known *Vajrachchedikā-prajñāpāramitā Sūtra* (‘*Vajra* Cutter Perfection of Wisdom *Sūtra*’ or ‘Diamond *Sūtra*’) – are part of the *Mahāprajñāpāramitā Sūtra*.

The first *Daihannya kuyō* is said to have been held in the imperial palace in 663 CE by the Emperor Gāozōng of the *Táng* dynasty on hearing that Xuánzàng had completed his translation. In present times, the ceremony is performed by *Zen* communities, especially in monasteries, to pray for world peace and the security of the Japanese nation.

**dakṣhiṇā** (S/H), **dakṣhiṇā** (Pa), **dakṣhiṇā** (Pu) *Lit.* a present, a boon, a gift, a blessing; charity; a gift given by a disciple or student to his teacher in gratitude for his guidance; an offering made to a deity; a gift given to *brāhmaṇs* for performing some rite or sacrifice, or simply for their blessings; also, a good milk cow. *Dakṣhiṇā* also means the right side and hence the southern side (because directions are given as if facing east).

Regarding the *dakṣhiṇā* given to priests, there is no fixed charge, although the donor is expected to give according to his means. If he is stingy or evades the donation for services rendered, it is said in Hindu texts that calamity is likely to befall him. The *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* says, “A sacrifice without gift (*dakṣhiṇā*) will come to harm.”<sup>1</sup> According to *Shatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, *dakṣhiṇās* are “healing medicine”.<sup>2</sup> The advice has an ulterior motive, however, since the *Brāhmaṇas* were written by the *brāhmaṇs* of those times.

The *Bhagavad Gītā* speaks of the tradition of giving gifts to the priests in return for their services:

That worship (*yajña*) is said to be of the nature of *tamas* (darkness),  
which is not sanctioned by scriptures,  
without the distribution of food,  
without the chanting of holy *mantras*,  
without sacramental gifts (*dakṣhiṇā*),  
and without sincere faith (*shraddhā*).

*Bhagavad Gītā* 17:13; cf. BGT

The necessity of faith (*shraddhā*) is commonly mentioned in association with sacrificial rites. Without faith that a sacrifice or ritual will bring about the desired benefits, it will not be effective:

Whoever offers a sacrifice (*yajña*) without first taking firm hold on faith (*shraddhā*), that man's sacrifice inspires no confidence. . . . But if a man first takes firm hold on faith and then offers his sacrifice (*yajña*), then in that man's sacrifice both gods and men place confidence.

*Taittirīya Saṃhitā* 1:6.8.1, in VE p.401

The same is true of *dakṣhiṇā*. In a series of questions and answers put to the sage Yājñavalkya in the *Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upanishad*, the scholarly Shākalya asks, “By what are the offerings given to priests (*dakṣhiṇā*) supported?”, to which Yājñavalkya replies, “By faith (*shraddhā*), for when one has faith, one gives offering to the priests (*dakṣhiṇā*).” Faith here implies faith in the teachings of the *Vedas*, for no one would offer *dakṣhiṇā* unless they believed the priestly ceremonies and sacrifices to be of value. Shākalya continues, “And by what is faith supported?”, to which Yājñavalkya replies, “By the heart (*hṛidaya*), for faith is known through the heart.”<sup>3</sup>

*Dakṣhiṇā*, however, is not always to be understood as material goods. In a section where priestly ceremonies are correlated with common human activities, the *Chhāndogya Upanishad* maintains that there are gifts that are higher than the merely physical:

Austerity (*tapas*), charity (*dāna*), uprightness (*ārjava*), non-violence (*ahimsā*), and speaking the truth (*satya-vachana*) – these are the (true) gifts for the priests (*dakṣhiṇā*).

*Chhāndogya Upanishad* 3:17.4

The parallel here is that both *dakṣhiṇā* and deeds such as charity are ennobling to human nature.

Much later in time, and using the term in a general sense, Guru Nānak (1469–1539) prays to God for only one gift – the blessing of His divine Name, His creative power:

O creator Lord, You alone are my benefactor.  
I beg for only one blessing (*dakṣhiṇā*) from You:  
please bless me with Your Name (*Nām*).

*Guru Nānak, Ādi Granth* 1329, AGK

Perhaps the best-known story concerning *dakṣhiṇā* is found in the *Kaṭha Upanishad*, where a certain Vājashravas gives all his possessions to the priests in the hope of attaining a heavenly reward:

Desirous (of the fruit of the *vishvajit* sacrifice), Vājashravas, so it is said, gave away all his possessions. He had a son, by name, Nachiketas. When the last gifts (*dakṣiṇā*) (of cattle) were being taken (to the priests), faith (*shraddhā*) entered into him, though still a boy; and he thought: “These cows that have drunk their last drop of water, eaten their last blade of grass, yielded their last ounce of milk and spent their strength; joyless, indeed, are those worlds, to which he, who presents such (cows) will go.”

*Kaṭha Upanishad 1:1.1–3*

*Vāja* (food) *shravas* (fame) means one who has become famous through making gifts of food. Vājashravas thus symbolizes the devotee of orthodox religion and its outer forms. His young son, Nachiketas, who represents the seeker of eternal Truth, is uncomfortable with the tawdry nature of the gifts given by his father in the hope of heavenly beatitude, and in particular the major part of the gift, consisting of a herd of old and useless cows. Moreover, his father has not given away everything, for he has not given away his son. Symbolically, it means that despite the seemingly extravagant nature of his donation, Vājashravas has not fully surrendered everything. He has not surrendered his entire self. Nachiketas points this out to his father by asking him:

“Father, to whom will you give me?” When he repeated it for a second and a third time, his father said to him, “I will give you to Death (*Yama*).”

*Kaṭha Upanishad 1:1.4*

Being made to realize the imperfection of his gift by his small son, his father is angry and impatient, telling the boy, “Go to hell!” Nachiketas, however, takes his father literally and pays a visit to *Yama* – and so begins the classic dialogue of the *Kaṭha Upanishad* on death and the true nature of the soul. It is the true spiritual faith of Nachiketas that enables him to see the hollowness and incompleteness of his father’s sacrifice; and it is his deep faith that makes him a fit disciple for the spiritual path, which entitles him to learn the secrets of life and death.

1. *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* 6:35.
2. *Shatapatha Brāhmaṇa* 12:7.1.14.
3. *Bṛihadāranyaka Upanishad* 3:9.21.

**ḍamarū** (S), **ḍamrū** (H), **da ma ru, rnga chung** (T) *Lit.* a small, hand-held, double-headed drum shaped like an hourglass, commonly played in India, Tibet, and Nepal; one of a number of ritual implements used in Hindu tantric

practices and Tibetan tantric Buddhist rites, and mentioned throughout tantric Buddhist texts such as the *Kālachakra Tantra*. In a secular context, being light and portable, the ḍamarū is a favourite percussion instrument of travelling musicians and street performers in India.

In Hindu mythology, the ḍamarū is associated with the deity *Shiva*, who is believed to have created it in order to produce the spiritual sound by which the creation comes into being, and is ordered and sustained. The sound of the ḍamarū has therefore become associated with the generation of spiritual energy. According to another legend, the four-armed *Shiva Naṭarāja*, lord of the dance, pleased with the meditation of the grammarian Pāṇini (C6th BCE), appears before him and dances the dance (the *tāṇḍava*) of creation. In the uppermost of his two right hands he holds a ḍamarū, symbolizing the creative sound by which the creation comes into being. In his upper left hand is a flame, symbolizing its destruction, implying a cyclic process of creation and destruction. *Shiva*'s lower right hand exhibits the fear-dispelling gesture (*abhaya-mudrā*), while his lower left points to the raised leg that grants liberation. Pāṇini hears the sound from *Shiva*'s ḍamarū as the *Māheshvara Sūtrāṇi* or *Shiva Sūtras*, a fourteen-line composition made up of the basic phonemes comprising the Sanskrit alphabet, which are referred to in Pāṇini's seminal book of Sanskrit grammar, *Ashṭādhyāyī*.

The ḍamarū was used in the tantric rites of North India during the first millennium CE, whence it was adopted into tantric Buddhism, and found its way into Tibet. A large ḍamarū is regarded as an essential aspect of *gcod* (severance), a Tibetan, tantric meditation practice held in a cemetery, intended to dispel the false notion of the existence of an individual self or ego. Tantric ḍamarūs are generally larger than their Hindu counterparts, and make use of bones and human skulls in their construction.

The two ends of a ḍamarū are covered with parchment, brass, or other metal. Two strings with knots or strikers, on their ends are attached to the narrow waist of the drum, so that when the vertically oriented drum is rotated back and forth in the right hand, the strikers hit both ends of the drum producing a rattling, rhythmic beat.

Ḍamarūs vary in size and construction. Smaller ones range from 10 to 25 centimetres (4 to 10 inches) in length and 8 to 20 centimetres (3 to 8 inches) in diameter, while the larger version, used in conjunction with the *gcod* practice, has a diameter of up to 40 centimetres (16 inches). The two conical ends of the hourglass shape are usually made out of wood or, in the case of ḍamarūs used for *gcod*, two human skulls. The two ends are connected by a wooden stem or (for tantric use) a length of bone, laced together with cord or strips of leather. At the waist of the ḍamarū, near the centre of the lacing, one or two strings are attached, each ending with a knot, a bead, a ball or a piece of bone to serve as a striker, which produces a rhythmic rattling beat when the ḍamarū is twisted back and forth. Ritual playing of the ḍamarū can be a solo

performance or as a part of a group led by a master chanter. The making of *ḍamarūs* as well as their playing demands a considerable degree of skill and has evolved into a musical art form.

Various symbolic meanings have been attributed to the shape and construction of the *ḍamarū*. According to one interpretation, the two ends separated by the thin waist symbolize the two contrasted states of existence, the manifest and the unmanifest. In another interpretation, the upper end represents male creativity (the *linga* or phallus) while the lower end represents female creativity (the *yoni* or female genitalia). The two ends join in union at the waist, symbolizing the beginning of creation; and they separate at the two ends, symbolizing its destruction. The beat of the drum is said to symbolize the heartbeat and the passage of time. The hollow sound of the *ḍamarū* has also been said to represent the sound of emptiness (*shūnyatā*), as the nature of Reality. Various symbolic, ritual items may be hung on tantric *ḍamarūs*, while *mantras* and various symbols may be drawn on the inside or outside of the two ends.

See also: **gcod** (8.5).

**dance (Native North American)** Dance plays a major part in almost all Native North American rituals and ceremonies, both public and private, religious and secular.

There are numerous dances among the many tribal nations, named differently and used for a variety of purposes. Many are traditional; some were received in dreams or visions; a few are recent in origin; some are created for a particular purpose or performance. Purposes include: healing; inner purification; communion with the Great Spirit and the higher powers and spirits; spirit calling; to induce spirit travel or states of altered consciousness; to prepare for war; to seek blessings and guidance from the spirits in connection with hunting, and the sowing, growing, and harvest seasons; for social functions such as greetings, weddings, births, and memorials. Some dances last for several days – not continuously, but restarted after periods, long or short, for food and drink, bathing, changing clothes, rest or sleep, and so forth. The same dance will also vary between the tribal nations who perform it. Like dances in other parts of the world, a new dance can easily catch on and spread rapidly through the tribal nations.

See also: **ghost dance**, **sun dance** (8.5), **yuwipi** (8.5).

**daṇḍa** (S), **ber ka**, **dbyug pa**, **hprul gyis** (T) *Lit.* stick, rod, pole; walking stick, staff, mace; cudgel, club; hence, punishment, chastisement, a fine,

imprisonment; a common ritual item carried by some schools of itinerant Indian *sādhus* and Jain mendicants; a symbolic accessory seen in images and sculptures of both Hindu and Buddhist (especially Tibetan) deities.

Such staffs are often ornamented or carved in various symbolic ways. In Tibetan Buddhism, the staff may be topped by a *dorje* (representation of a thunderbolt or *vajra*), by a skull and *dorje*, or by a trident, peacock feathers, or a representation of flames. In the Hindu tradition, Kṛishṇa's staff is a hooked shepherd's staff, while the staff of *Shiva* is made of bone. A *daṇḍa* is one of the few possessions carried by Indian *sādhus*, especially *Shaiva sādhus*, who are also known as *daṇḍī sannyāsins*. The other traditional possessions of a *sādhū* are a water pot (*kamaṇḍalu*), a begging bowl (*pātra*), a rosary (*mālā*), and maybe a cloth and fire tongs. For a wandering monk or *sādhū*, the *daṇḍa* has a purely practical function as a walking aid for defence against wild animals, snakes, and so on.

Some of the yogic *Upanishads*, however, indicate that the ultimate *sādhū* or *paramahansa* has no need of any possessions at all, nor of any external symbols of his state of detachment or religious status. He should have risen above everything of this world and be entirely absorbed in *Brahman*, the Ultimate:

By looking within, he realizes the nature of the entire universe, and he renounces all personal possessions, . . . such as his symbolic staff (*daṇḍa*), water pot, waistband and covering loincloth, along with all the ritualistic duties previously enjoined upon him. He becomes unclad (*digambara*, sky-clad, clothed by the six directions), abandoning even the acceptance of a discoloured, worn-out bark garment or (deer) skin, and he behaves thereafter as one free from *mantras* (*i.e.* performance of rituals). He gives up shaving, oil bathing, the perpendicular mark of sandal paste on the forehead, and so on.

*Turiyātīta-avadhūta Upanishad 1; cf. SUAR pp.37–38*

The *paramahansa* carries neither the staff (*daṇḍa*), nor wears the hair-tuft, nor the holy thread, nor any covering. He feels neither cold nor heat, neither happiness nor misery, neither honour nor contempt, *etc.* It is meet that he should be beyond the reach of the six billows of this world-ocean (hunger, thirst, grief, delusion, decay of body, and death). Having given up all thought of calumny, conceit, jealousy, ostentation, arrogance, attachment or aversion to things, joy and sorrow, lust and anger, covetousness, self-delusion, elation, envy, egoism and the like, he regards his body as a corpse, since he has thoroughly destroyed the body-idea. Being eternally free from the cause of doubt and of misconceived and false knowledge, realizing the eternal *Brahman*, he lives in That himself, with the consciousness, "I myself am He,

I am That which is ever calm, immutable, undivided, of the essence of knowledge-bliss. That alone is my real nature.” ... That (*jñāna*, wisdom) alone is his holy thread. Through knowledge of the unity of the *jīvātman* (living soul, incarnate soul) with the *Paramātman*, the distinction between them is wholly gone.

*Paramahaṃsa Upanishad 2; cf. MUM pp.4–5*

In Jainism, a long wooden staff (*daṇḍa*) with a carved top is used by *Shvetāmbara* mendicants of the *Mūrtipūjaka* sect, who worship images of the *Tīrthankaras* in temples. A curved tip to the head resembles the sacred Mount Meru, beneath which are carved symbols understood to symbolize the three worlds (*triloka*) or the three fundamentals of Jain philosophy (the three gems, *ratna-traya*); an auspicious symbol of a full water pot (*kalasha*); and five horizontal lines that represent either the five *parameshṭhins* (great beings) who are deemed worthy of worship or the five *mahāvratas* (great vows) taken by mendicants.<sup>1</sup>

See also: **daṇḍī** (7.1).

1. See “daṇḍa,” *A to Z of Jainism*, AZJW.

**daṇḍavat** (S), **daṇḍavat** (H), **dandaut** (Pu) *Lit.* like (*vat*) a staff (*daṇḍa*); obeisance, bowing down; falling or lying prostrate like a rod or staff; full-length prostration on the ground; a form of Hindu and Sikh worship in which the devotee bows down or prostrates himself, particularly before a *guru*; the intention being to signify humility and submission.

Generally, mystics do not encourage external demonstrations and self-abasement of this nature. Nevertheless, a devoted disciple naturally feels great gratitude towards a *guru* who has given him spiritual wealth and liberation. Speaking metaphorically, Kabīr writes of this inner attitude:

Prostrate (*daṇḍavat*) before the *guru*:  
thank him millions and millions of times.

*Kabīr, Sākhī Sangrah, Gurudev kā ang 1, KSS p.1*

See also: **daṇḍa**.

**dào chǎng** (C) *Lit.* *Dào* place (*chǎng*); a place used for Daoist or other ritual purposes; by extension the rites that are practised there. Sites for Daoist or Buddhist rituals are of differing sizes and take a variety of forms, from a temporary site or natural arena to a small shrine or large hall.



**dàohào** (C) *Lit.* *Dào* name (*hào*); a Daoist name; broadly synonymous with *fǎhào* and *fǎmíng*, both meaning religious (*fǎ*) name (*hào*, *míng*); used in Daoism in much the same way as a *zì* (traditional, assumed, or ‘style’ name). Despite already having one or more *zì*, a Daoist disciple may assume a Daoist *zì* (a *dàohào*), following which his given or personal name (*míng*) is no longer used in Daoist contexts. The *dàohào* is either self-selected or given by the master. Sometimes a *dàohào* is bestowed posthumously as a mark of respect.

For a monastic Daoist, the *dàohào* may relate to the name of the sect or lineage to which he belongs and to his particular generation in that lineage – in which case, it is also referred to as a *fǎhào* (religious name). In a formal monastic setting, Daoists of the *Zhèngyī* (formerly known as *Tiānshī*) school retain their birth name and then take a Daoist surname (*dàohào*) when ordained, to indicate the name of their lineage. This is in contrast to Daoists of the *Quánzhēn* school and Chinese Buddhists, who use a lineage generation or religious name (*fǎmíng*) as their only name.

A *dàohào* generally comprises two characters: usually, one alludes to a characteristic or aspiration of the disciple, while the other echoes the *dàohào* of the disciple’s master. For example, the twelfth-century master Wáng Zhé (*aka.* Chóngyáng) gave his disciple Sūn Fùchūn the *dàohào* Bù’èr (‘not two’). This *dàohào* is generally understood to mean ‘no second way’ (of attaining the *Dào*), but may also be interpreted as ‘unique’ or ‘peerless’, which describes master Sūn Bù’èr’s renowned determination. Alternatively, it may refer to her rejection of duality and multiplicity in favour of becoming one with the *Dào*. The many examples of *dàohào* include:

Lǚ Yán (b.796 CE)

*zì*: Dòngbīn (‘Cavern Guest’, his popular name); *aka.* Lǚzǔ (‘Ancestor Lǚ’)  
*dàohào*: Chúnóng (‘Pure Spirituality’)

Sīmǎ Chéngzhēn (C8th)

*zì*: Zīwēi (‘Master of Subtlety’)  
*dàohào*: Báiyún (‘White Cloud’), and also Dàoyǐn (‘Recluse of the *Dào*’)

Mǎ Yù (C13th) (original name Cóngyì)

*zì*: Yífǔ (‘Good Man’)  
*dàohào*: Dānyáng (‘Elixir Yáng’)

Since the beginning of the first century CE, on attainment of spiritual mastery or simply out of respect, the honorific suffix *zǐ* (master) was appended to an adept’s *dàohào*, especially in the case of Daoist masters. This applies to those in the preceding list (all of whom became masters); hence their honorific names are: Chúnóngzǐ, Báiyúnzǐ, and Dānyángzǐ.

Since ancient times, many Daoist adepts have chosen to lead secluded, tranquil lives, usually in forested mountains, preferring to remain anonymous. For this reason, they have used only their *dàohào*. This helps explain the many texts written by people known only by their Daoist name. The *Yǎngzhēn jí*, for instance, was written by an eighteenth-century Daoist hermit (*yǐnshì*), who, wishing to remain anonymous, was known only by his *dàohào* Yǎngzhēnzǐ ('Master who Cultivates Reality').

See also: **fǎhào**, **fǎmíng**, **zì**.

**dar lcog** (T) *Lit.* flagstaff; in particular, rectangular, Tibetan prayer flags strung on a vertical pole. See **rlung rta**.

**Dash(a)-Lakshan(a)-Parvan** (S/H), **Daslakshan Parva** (Pk) *Lit.* festival (*parvan*) of ten (*dasha*) virtues (*lakshana*); held during the period (*chāturmāsa*, four months) when wandering mendicants have returned to their monasteries for the rainy season; the ten-day *Digambara* equivalent of the eight-day *Shvetāmbara* festival of *Paryushaṇa*; also called *Paryushaṇa* or *Paryushaṇa Parva*; begins on the fifth day of the bright half of *Bhādrapada* (August/September); the most significant event in the *Digambara* religious calendar, the last day being regarded as the most sacred.<sup>1</sup> *Digambaras* (sky-clad) and *Shvetāmbaras* (clothed in white) are the two main Jain sects or schools, the *Digambaras* adopting a more ascetic extreme than the *Shvetāmbaras*.

For some laypeople, the festival period is like a temporary monastic retreat. It is a renewal of faith and practice devoted to religious activities, especially austerities such as fasting, spiritual study, and meditation. Many observe a fast, of which there are several regimes. Some eat nothing and drink only boiled water for the duration of the festival; others eat nothing on the first and last days; some eat only once a day.

The ten chapters of the *Tattvārtha Sūtra* by the *Digambara* teacher Āchārya Umāswāmī (c. C1st–2nd) are recited, with a daily discourse on one of the ten virtues outlined by Umāswāmī in his chapter on moral and ethical behaviour.<sup>2</sup> These are forgiveness (*kshamā*), humility and kindness (*mārdava*), honesty and straightforwardness (*ārjava*), purity (*shaucha*), truthfulness (*satya*), self-control (*saṃyama*), asceticism (*tapas*), renunciation (*tyāga*), detachment (*akinchāṇa*), and celibacy (*brahmacharya*). The *Tattvārtha Sūtra* summarizes the main tenets of the Jain faith.

The last and most sacred day (*Ananta-chaturdashī*, Endless Fourteenth) is associated with the memory of Mahāvīra, the twenty-fourth and last *Tīrthankara* in the present cycle. Many *Digambaras* fast on this day and perform the rite of communal confession (*kshamāpāna*, asking forgiveness).

This consists of sincerely saying “*Micchāmi dukkaḍaṃ* (may all my wrongdoings be fruitless)” or “*Uttama-kshamā* (supreme forgiveness)” to one another. The sayings imply, “If I should have caused you any offence, knowingly or unknowingly, in thought, word or deed, then I ask your forgiveness.” The day is also known as *Kshamāvanī* (‘Forgiveness Day’) and *Samvatsarī Pratikramaṇa* (‘Annual Confession of Wrongdoing’), often shortened to just *Samvatsarī*. In many places, there is a procession to the main Jain temple.

See also: **micchāmi dukkaḍaṃ, Paryushaṇa, pratikramaṇa.**

1. For many of the details in this entry, see “Daśa-Lakṣaṇa-Parvan,” *A to Z of Jainism*, AZJW and “paryushaṇa,” *Wikipedia*, ret. June 2015.
2. Umāswāmī, *Tattvārtha Sūtra* 7:1–34.

**Day of Judgment, Day of Resurrection, Day of the Lord, Day of Yahweh** The Last Day; the Last Judgment; the Day of Resurrection; the day of the Last Judgment of God; the end of the world; a day of accounting for all souls who have lived. The belief is common to a number of religions, though the details vary. Individual death is generally deemed to be associated with a judgment, and souls may also await a Day of Resurrection when they are reunited with their bodies in a general resurrection and a final judgment.

In Zoroastrianism, souls are required at death to cross the *Chinvatō Peretu* (Bridge of Judgment), where the quality of their actions in life – good and bad – are weighed. A preponderance of good deeds ensures a safe passage to heaven, while bad deeds lead to hell. The souls then await the end of times, when the devil (*Ahriman*) will be overcome, *Ahura Mazdā* (Lord of Life and Wisdom) will reunite them with their bodies and preside over a final judgment, and goodness will reign on earth.

The Jewish prophets speak of a Day of *Yahweh*,<sup>1</sup> when Israel and all nations will be judged, and the kingdom of God will be established on earth. In later times, opinion was divided over whether this included a general resurrection of the dead – a belief held by the Pharisees, but not necessarily by members of other Jewish groups.

In Christianity, the doctrine of an apocalypse or end of the world appears in the canonical gospels, in a passage often dubbed the ‘mini-apocalypse’, similar versions of which are found in *Mark*, *Matthew* and *Luke*,<sup>2</sup> though its original authorship is uncertain. The passage stands on its own and is introduced by the common device of the disciples asking Jesus a question, in this case, how they will recognize when the end of the world is at hand.

It is unlikely that the mini-apocalypse can be attributed to Jesus. In fact, for various reasons, it is normally judged by scholars to have been a later Christian addition, with echoes of Jesus’ teachings perhaps contained in it.

Grim events are said to foreshadow Jesus' second coming, but the "elect" will be saved from perdition and tribulation:

For in those days there will be such distress as, until now, has not been equalled since the beginning when God created the world, nor ever will be again. And if the Lord had not shortened that time, no one would have been saved; but he did shorten the time, for the sake of the elect whom he chose.

And if anyone says to you then, "Look, here is the Christ" or, "Look, he is there," do not believe it; for false Christs and false prophets will arise and produce signs and portents to deceive even the elect, if such were possible. Therefore, take heed and be on your guard, for I have forewarned you of everything.

But in those days, after that time of distress, the sun will be darkened, the moon will not give her light, the stars will come falling from heaven, and the powers that are in the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory; then too he will send the angels to gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the world to the ends of heaven.

*Mark 13:19–27; cf. JB, KJV*

The writer is evidently sincere in his predictions, although the question of who really wrote this apocalypse is now unanswerable. But the basis upon which the writer has founded his apocalyptic assertions may have partially stemmed from a misunderstanding of mystic teachings, in which the trials and tribulations to which souls are subjected are the vicissitudes of life in this world, where there are always "wars and rumours of wars",<sup>3</sup> not to mention the normal skirmishes of everyday life. It is into this scenario that a Son of God, a saviour as a Son of Man, is sent "with great power and glory" to gather in "his elect from the four winds" and take them back to the kingdom of heaven. This is an ancient mystic teaching, and to misconstrue the apocalypse as an earth-shattering, imminently expected event is to court disappointment.

The end of the world is again foretold in the obscure *Book of Revelation*, whose Greek title is the *Apocalypse of John. Revelations* and the mini-apocalypse belong to a category of Jewish literature that developed during the second and first centuries BCE, with antecedents in the earlier religious writings of Babylonia and Persia. It was a literary form or style, a means of expression or an art form, that lasted for many centuries, predominating in certain Judaic, as well as Christian and gnostic circles.

In these revelations, imagery, metaphor, allegory, symbolism, cypher, numbers, colours and all such devices were used to convey the author's meaning,

which often carried an eschatological message. At times, the revelational writing could become like a literary version of a cryptic crossword, where nothing meant quite what it seemed.

In the case of *Revelations*, the text is complex, written in clumsy Greek, probably by a native Hebrew speaker.<sup>4</sup> The book is missing from many early New Testament manuscripts and was never accepted by the Eastern Churches as authentic. The revelational aspects of the text are presented as seven prophetic visions, which culminate in the second coming of Jesus, the Day of Judgment, and the end of the world. However, the obscure and exotic imagery and symbolism of its language is such that the book has given rise to numerous, widely divergent interpretations.

The notion of a Day of Judgment and the end of the world was further developed in Christianity, where it became an article of faith, associated with the second coming (*parousia*) of Christ. It is found in three of the earliest creeds or statements of faith – the Nicene Creed (325), the fourth- or fifth-century Athanasian Creed and the fifth-century Apostles' Creed, traditionally believed to date back to the apostolic age. Based upon the apocalyptic passages in the synoptic gospels,<sup>5</sup> the dead are believed to rise from their graves and be judged by Christ, being assigned thereafter to eternal blessedness in heaven or eternal damnation in hell. St Paul also,<sup>6</sup> having been raised as a Pharisee to believe in a Last Day and the resurrection of the dead, promotes the idea as a part of his doctrine. Since the synoptic gospels were written two or three decades after his death, Paul may well have been the one who introduced the notion into Christianity,

Christian perceptions vary according to the individual. Imaginative preachers have painted horrific pictures of the hellfire awaiting sinners on the Last Day, and it is certain that many a tempted believer has been restrained by the thought of a final reckoning. Thus, Peter of Damaskos writes of “the appalling Day of Judgment”,<sup>7</sup> counselling: “Let us consider what we are going to say in our defence before our righteous Judge on the terrible Day of Judgment.”<sup>8</sup> The mystical author of the *Cloud of Unknowing*, however, has a more positive though enigmatic view of things:

I truly believe that the Day of Judgment will be a lovely day, when God will be seen clearly, and all His gifts. On that Day, some who are now despised and regarded as little or nothing because they are common sinners – and maybe even some that now are terrible sinners – shall sit most fittingly with the saints in His sight. And some that presently seem to be so holy and esteemed by men as angels – and maybe even some who have never committed mortal sin – shall sit most sorrowfully in the caves of hell.

*Cloud of Unknowing* 29; cf. CUCW p.97, CUEU p.145

It would be interesting to know what Jesus thought about the matter. It is widely acknowledged, however, that since so much of what is in the gospels is the work of those who came decades after Jesus, it is difficult to know exactly what he taught. The eschatological sections of the gospels are almost certainly the work of later hands, but in that non-scientific age where there was little or no understanding of geological or astronomical time spans, there is no reason why Jesus should not have subscribed to the belief, at least as a way of encouraging his listeners to lead decent lives. Whatever is within will be expressed outside, he says, and the law of justice is so exact and demanding that everyone will be held responsible even for the words they utter:

Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart brings forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things. But I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof on the Day of Judgment.

*Matthew 12:34–36; cf. KJV*

In Islam, belief in a Last Day is a fundamental part of the faith, considerable details of which are given in the *Qur'ān*.<sup>9</sup> It is known by a number of names, including the *Yawm al-Ākhir* (Last Day), the *Yawm al-Dīn* (Day of Religion), and the *Yawm al-Qiyāmah* (Day of Resurrection). On that Day, “the record of deeds will be placed open,”<sup>10</sup> believers will be led into paradise, and unbelievers into hell. There is also said to be a lesser judgment at the time of death, conducted by two angels, when martyrs go straight to paradise, while others are relegated to a kind of purgatory, awaiting the Last Day.

Mystics and those religions such as Buddhism, Jainism, Hinduism and Sikhism that have retained a belief in reincarnation teach that the day of judgment or accounting is the day of death. At that time, the soul is automatically judged according to the record of thoughts and actions that have been impressed upon the mind during the course of life, and which determine the future of that soul.

See also: **resurrection, resurrection (in Islam), second coming, al-Yawm al-Dīn.**

1. *E.g. Ezekiel 13:5; Isaiah 2:12; Joel 2:31.*
2. *Mark 13:1–37; Matthew 24:1–42; Luke 21:5–31.*
3. *Mark 13:7, KJV.*
4. See Hugh Schonfield, *The Authentic New Testament*, ANTH p.518.
5. *Mark 13:3ff.; Matthew 24:27ff., 25:31ff.; Luke 21:6ff.*
6. *Romans 2:5–16, 14:10; 1 Corinthians 4:5; 2 Corinthians 5:10.*

7. Peter of Damaskos, *Divine Knowledge, Philokalia, PCT3* p.75.
8. Peter of Damaskos, *Divine Knowledge, Philokalia, PCT3* p.104.
9. E.g. *Qur'ān* 39:67–75, 69:13–52, 82:1–6.
10. *Qur'ān* 39:69.

**dayr** (A/P) *Lit.* temple, monastery; in Sufi symbolism, the human form or realm of humanity (*‘ālam al-nāsūt*), especially in regard to its spiritual potential; also, the inner sanctum where the soul meets the divine beloved.

Jāmī therefore counsels the seeker to clear this house of all human imperfection so that he may live in the body-temple like those who are acquainted with the “Breath of Jesus”, a metaphor for the divine creative power:

Abide in the temple (*dayr*)  
 like those of the Breath of Jesus (*Dam-i ‘Īsā*):  
 Clear the house of those who are not intimates.  
*Jāmī, Tuhfat al-Aḥrār, Haft Awrang, HA p.411; cf. in SSE3 p.235*

Narāqī expresses gratitude for having been freed from the world of external religious observances so that he could set out on the road to the inner “monastery” and realization of the Divine:

Finally, I left the *Ka’bah* for the monastery (*dayr*):  
 a thousand thanks that all turned out well in the end.  
*Narāqī (Unsourced), in FNI3 p.189, in SSE3 p.234*

Similarly, Shaykh Bahā’ī says that he left the world of scholasticism behind on entry to the inner worlds:

You saw how, when Bahā’ī forgot his sadness (*gham*),  
 he left the seminary and took refuge in the monastery (*dayr*),  
 tearing up all the books of formal knowledge  
 and turning the paper into *ḥalvā* (a sweetmeat).  
*Shaykh Bahā’ī, Kullīyāt 1145–46, KSBA p.84, in SSE3 p.235*

Since the monastery (*dayr*) represents the inner worlds, the *pīr-i dayr* (master of the monastery) is the spiritual master. His understanding far exceeds that of the most learned of this world:

The abbot (*pīr-i dayr*) accomplishes in a month  
 what Aristotle could not in a hundred thousand years.  
*Shaykh Bahā’ī, Kullīyāt 996, KSBA p.68; cf. in SSE3 p.236*

**dayr-i mughān** (P) *Lit.* temple or monastery (*dayr*) of the magi (*mughān*); a Zoroastrian temple; in Sufi symbolism, a gathering of Sufis, internally or externally, *mugh* (magi) being a common Sufi metaphor for a mystic:

In *ṣūfī* terminology, *dayr-i mughān* denotes gatherings of saints and lovers of God.

*Javād Nūrbakhsh, Sufi Symbolism, FNI3 p.175*

Internally, *dayr-i mughān* implies an encounter with the divine beloved, as Ḥāfiẓ intimates:

A *ṣūfī* of the monastery (*ṣawmaʿat*) of the sacred world am I,  
by fortune placed in the temple of the magi (*dayr-i mughān*).

*Ḥāfiẓ, Dīvān, DHA p.165, DIH p.285; cf. DHWC (419:5) p.707*

Alluding to the fire worshipping which is a part of Zoroastrian temple worship, Ḥāfiẓ says that he has found the eternal “fire”:

They hold me dear in the temple of the magi (*dayr-i mughān*)  
because the never dying fire always burns in my heart.

*Ḥāfiẓ, Dīvān, DHA p.21, DIH p.64; cf. DHWC (109:8) p.230, in SSE3 p.217*

Again speaking metaphorically, he also writes that when the disciples (“wine drinkers”) experienced the inner vision of the divine “friend”, they all became spiritually intoxicated with the “wine” of divine love:

Into the temple of the magi (*dayr-i mughān*) came my friend,  
cup in hand, so intoxicated with wine that with his eye alone  
he intoxicated all the other wine drinkers.

*Ḥāfiẓ, Dīvān, DHA p.26, DIH p.73; cf. DHWC (37:1) p.100*

**dharmachakra mudrā** (S) *Lit.* wheel (*chakra*) of *Dharma* gesture (*mudrā*); a symbolic hand gesture representing the setting in motion of the wheel of the *Dharma* (Way, teaching); also called the ‘teaching gesture’; a symbolic hand gesture signifying the authenticity of the *Dharma* expounded by the Buddha; relates to the delivery of the Buddha’s discourse in the deer park near Vārāṇasī, following his enlightenment, in which he first expounded the four noble truths, thereby setting in motion the wheel of his teaching to the world. The discourse was given to the five ascetic companions with whom he had practised many years of austerities, and it is said that while he was speaking, they each attained enlightenment. The *dharmachakra mudrā* is not used exclusively in images of the Buddha. It is also the common pose with



which the celestial or *dhyāni buddha* Vairochana is depicted. Vairochana Buddha is believed to transform ignorance (S. *avidyā*) into wisdom (*prajñā*).

There are many variations to the position of the fingers in this *mudrā*. One of the better known has the thumb and index of both hands touching each other's tip to form a circle, while the remaining three fingers on each hand are extended. The circle represents the wheel, while the meeting of the two fingers represents the union of skilful means (*upāya-kaushalya*) and wisdom (*prajñā*). Of the three fingers on the right hand, the middle finger symbolizes the hearers (*shrāvakas*), the ring finger symbolizes those who realize the inner meaning of his teachings and attain enlightenment for themselves alone (*pratyeka-buddhas*), and the little finger symbolizes the *Mahāyāna* doctrine. The three fingers of the left hand represent the three jewels (*triratna*) of Buddhism: the Buddha, *Dharma*, and *sangha* (community of monks, nuns, and all who practise the *Dharma*). Both hands are held at the heart level, which signifies that the Buddha's teachings come from his heart.

See also: **dharmachakra** (7.5), **mudrā**.

**dhoti** (H/Pu) A loincloth, a hip-cloth; a rectangular piece of unstitched cloth, up to seven or eight yards long and a yard and a half wide, wrapped around the waist and legs, and generally secured at the waist with a knot or knots; worn in a variety of traditional lengths, styles and fabrics (generally cotton or silk), largely dependent upon the region; the traditional Hindu garb for men, and the usual dress of Hindu priests and *sādhus*; of declining usage in modern times, especially among the young urban population and as everyday work-wear, but still retaining popularity as casual home-wear; from the Sanskrit *dhautā* (washed, purified; bright, white, shining).

Mystics have pointed out that being dressed in a particular manner as an indication of religious status does not confer spirituality upon a person. For how, they say, can wearing a certain dress change the nature of the mind within? Guru Nānak writes of priests and *paṇḍits*:

You read your books and say your prayers,  
and then engage in debate;  
You worship stones and sit like a stork,  
pretending to be in *samādhi*.  
With your mouth, you utter falsehood,  
and you adorn yourself with precious decorations;  
You recite the three lines of the *gāyatrī*,  
three times a day.  
Around your neck is a rosary,  
and on your forehead is a sacred mark;

Upon your head is a turban,  
 and you wear two loincloths (*dhoti*).  
 If you knew the nature of God,  
 you would know that all of these beliefs and rituals are in vain.  
 Says Nānak, meditate with deep faith:  
 without the true *guru*, no one finds the way.

*Guru Nānak, Ādi Granth 470, AGK*

Outer forms such as these do not lead the soul to its home of spiritual peace;  
 for that, the divine Name or creative power is required:

Walking sticks, begging bowls, hair tufts, sacred threads,  
 loincloths (*dhoti*), pilgrimages to sacred shrines  
 and wandering all around –  
 Without the Lord's Name (*Rām Nām*),  
 peace and tranquillity are not obtained.

*Guru Nānak, Ādi Granth 1127, AGK*

A *dhoti* is also the name of a long strip of cloth about three inches wide, which is first soaked in water and then fed through the mouth into the upper part of the stomach, one end being kept outside. It is revolved there to clean the stomach, and is then pulled out through the mouth and washed. This process is repeated until the inner cleansing is complete. It is one of the preparatory cleansing practices in *haṭha yoga*.

See also: **haṭha yoga** (8.5).

**diǎnyǎn** (C), **tengen** (J) *Lit.* dot (*diǎn*) the eyes (*yǎn*); the consecration of an image of a *buddha*, *bodhisattva* or guardian deity by painting or inking in the eyes. See **kāiyǎn**.

**Dīpavali** (S), **Dīvali**, **Dīwali** (H/Pu) *Lit.* row (*āvali*) of lights (*dīpa*); the festival of lights, celebrated by Hindus, Jains and Sikhs, lasting for five days spanning three days at the end of the dark half of the Indian month of *Āshwin* (September/October) and two days at the start of the light half of *Kārtik* (October/November). In the Hindu lunisolar calendar, the exact days (according to the Gregorian calendar) vary from year to year, but the third day, *Dīwali* day, always falls on the new moon day of *Kārtik*. *Dīwali* is so-called because of the spectacular illumination and fireworks that traditionally form a part of the celebrations.

The Hindu (*Vikram Saṃvat*) calendar consists of twelve lunar months, with a leap-month every seventh year in order to correct the difference between twelve lunar months and one solar year. Those who follow the *Vikram Saṃvat* calendar celebrate *Dīwali* as the first day of the New Year. Deeming it an auspicious day, many businesses start new accounts and perform religious ceremonies. In the Jain tradition, as well as some parts of India such as Gujarat, the New Year is deemed to start on the day after *Dīwali*.

*Dīwali* day itself is celebrated on the third day of the festival, when small earthenware bowls filled with oil, one or two wicks to each bowl, are lit in the evening, and are set up in rows both inside and outside the houses. Millions of such lights throughout India and in other countries that celebrate *Dīwali* are placed on rooftops and outside doors and windows.

The origins of *Dīwali* probably lie in an ancient Indian festival that followed the summer harvest. In more recent times, Sikhs, Jains and different Hindu schools have related the festival to different historical or mythological events in their particular traditions. Even among Hindu communities, the associated legends and the resulting religious ceremonies and dedication of the festival vary from region to region.

Some Hindus see the *Dīwali* festival as a celebration of *Lakshmī*. The first day of the festival commemorates the mythological birth of *Lakshmī* from the churning of the cosmic ocean of milk by the *devas* (gods) and *asuras* (demons); and the night of *Dīwali* day is when *Lakshmī* chose *Vishṇu* as her husband and married him. Some believe that *Dīwali* day is when *Vishṇu* returned to *Lakshmī* and their residence in *vaikuṇṭha* (heaven), and that those who worship her at this time are benefited by her happiness, and are thereby blessed by good fortune in the year to come.

For many Hindu communities, the first day of the festival, known as *Dhanteras* or *Dhanvantari Trayodashi*, is dedicated to *Lakshmī pūjā* (worship of *Lakshmī*), although such worship is also performed on other days of the festival, especially on the third day. *Teras* (thirteenth) indicates the day of the lunar cycle and *dhan* (wealth) refers to *Lakshmī*, the goddess of wealth and prosperity. The day includes a symbolic ‘washing’ of money in the home. Traditionally, coins were actually washed in milk and water. Giving money to those in need is also regarded as a way of ‘washing’ money.

In Bengal, Assam and Orissa, in a custom introduced during the eighteenth century by Rāja Kṛishṇachandra of Navadvīpa, the *Dīwali* festival is dedicated to *Kālī*, the universal Mother. In the Braj and north central regions of India, the focus of worship is Kṛishṇa, Braj being understood as the place where Kṛishṇa passed his childhood.

For some, *Dīwali* commemorates the day *Vishṇu* banished Emperor Mahābali to the netherworlds. Although a demon, Mahābali was such a pious, just and benevolent ruler, and his *yajñas* (sacrifices) were so successful

that the merit of his good deeds earned him sovereignty of the three worlds (earth, heaven, and the netherworlds). The gods – being jealous of Mahābali's achievements and fearing that he would ask a boon from them that they would be unable to grant – implored *Vishṇu* to restore heaven to their ruler *Indra*. Assuming the form of a dwarf (*Vāmana*), *Vishṇu* appeared before Mahābali, requesting, as a boon, as much land as he could cover in three steps. Thinking that a dwarf could not cover much ground in three steps, Mahābali granted the boon. But as soon as the boon was granted, the dwarf expanded himself to an immense size until he filled the world, and in two steps strode over earth and heaven. Realizing who he was dealing with, Mahābali humbly placed his head before *Vishṇu*, for the dwarf's third step. In recognition of Mahābali's humility and benevolence, *Vishṇu* granted him immortality, and allowed him to retain sovereignty of the netherworld. In some parts of South India, especially Kerala, Mahābali himself also receives homage, since he is considered to have been an enlightened monarch and because his rule was so benevolent.

Perhaps the most widely known legend that is associated with *Dīwali* is the return of Lord Rāma with his wife Sītā and his brother Lakshmaṇa to Ayodhyā, and his subsequent coronation after fourteen years of exile. His adventures are recounted in the epic *Rāmāyaṇa*, a tale that includes the vanquishing of Rāvaṇa, the evil king of Lankā. The symbolic and mystical meaning of the *Rāmāyaṇa* was brought out by the mystic Tulsīdās (c. 1532–1623) in his version of the story, *Rām Charit Mānas*, and again in the nineteenth century by Tulsī Sāhib of Hathras in his *Ghaṭ Rāmāyaṇ*.

Gambling, especially card playing, is also traditionally associated with *Dīwali*. According to the myth, *Shiva* and *Pārvatī* are continually engaged in a game of dice (*chausar*). The game symbolizes the continuous ebb and flow of creation and dissolution, of separation and union, of the cosmic *līlā* (play) of *māyā* (illusion). In the beginning, the two poles of potential creation, symbolized as *Shiva* and *Pārvatī*, are One. But *Pārvatī* wishes to play dice with her partner, and so the One becomes two, and the game of creation begins. Without *Pārvatī* and her primal desire to play a game of chance, the play of creation could not have come into being. Most of the time, *Shiva* loses; and so the game continues, symbolizing the continual effort of creation to regain its original state of divine Oneness. It is from this legend that the belief has developed that gambling by playing cards during *Dīwali* is auspicious, and that whoever gambles at that time will be lucky for the remainder of the year. Human weakness is easily justified, and casinos and gambling houses do brisk business during the days of the *Dīwali* festival.

On the fifth and last day of the festival, known as *Yamadvitīyā*, sisters commonly invite their brothers to their homes for a meal. Traditionally, this was to enable the brothers to check that everything was well in their sister's marital home. Brothers would generally bring a gift or leave money under

their plates after finishing their meal. The custom arises from the legend that this was the day on which *Yama*, the lord of death, visited his sister *Yamunā*, granting her the boon that whoever visited her on that day would attain *moksha* (liberation).

According to another myth associated with the festival, it is believed that *Dīwali* took its origin from the day *Kṛishṇa* killed the demon, *Narakāsura*, and brought a time of peace and happiness into the world.

In Jainism, *Dīwali* is commemorated as the death anniversary of *Mahāvīra* (c.599–527 BCE), the twenty-fourth and last *Tīrthankara* in the present cycle, who – it is said – discarded his physical body and attained *nirvāṇa* on *Dīwali*. According to the traditional story, upon hearing of his death the *rājas* of the Ganges Valley lit lamps in acknowledgement of the great spiritual light that had left the world. Although it is believed that great merit is gained by fasting on *Dīwali* day, most of the Jain laity enjoy the occasion as a time of togetherness with family and friends. Some of the devout laity light lamps before *Mahāvīra*'s image in the temple, and recite a song of devotion in praise of all liberated beings (*siddhas*). Some make a pilgrimage to *Pāvāpurī*, the place where *Mahāvīra* is believed to have attained liberation. The following day is said to have been the day when *Indrabhūti Gautama*, one of *Mahāvīra*'s chief disciples (*gaṇadhara*s), attained *kevala-jñāna* (omniscience). The spiritual symbolism of the Jain festival, however, is not forgotten:

*Dīwali* is a festival of celebrations in India and among Indians all over the world. It is an occasion for happiness and togetherness. This is an occasion where everyone, irrespective of his or her religious and economic background celebrates *Dīwali*. It teaches us to uphold the true values of life, to destroy the ignorance that hampers humanity, and to drive away darkness that engulfs the light of knowledge. . . .

People show their happiness by lighting earthen lamps and decorating their houses with *rangoli* (patterns, often intricate, in coloured rice, flour, sand, petals, *etc.*), and inviting family and friends for a feast. In Jainism, the lighting of lamps is symbolic of lighting the lamp within us. Just as a light brightens everything around it, our presence should brighten people around us – we should be of help to others and bring peace and happiness to ourselves and to others.

It marks the beginning of the New Year, and is a brand new beginning for all. *Dīwali* is celebrated for five days, each day has its own significance and myth. . . . *Dīwali* is the day when *Bhagavān Mahāvīra*, the twenty-fourth *Tīrthankara*, attained *nirvāṇa*.

*First Step of Jainism, FSJJ pp.66–67*

In Sikhism, *Dīwali* commemorates *Bandī Chhor Divas* ('Day of Prisoners' Release'), when in 1620 the sixth *guru*, *Hargobind Singh*, secured the release

of himself and fifty-two Hindu *rājas* who had been imprisoned by Emperor Jahangir in the Mughul fort at Gwalior. It is said that the Golden Temple in Amritsar was illuminated by many lights to welcome his return. This illumination along with fireworks and other celebrations is re-enacted on *Dīwali*.

Looked at from a broad perspective, *Dīwali* symbolizes the triumph of light over darkness, of good over evil. It signifies the spiritual illumination that results when ignorance (darkness) is removed by mystic knowledge (light). The real light, of which the outer lights are only a symbol, is that of the inner realms and of God Himself. The real home to which the soul returns is the eternal realm of *sat lok* (true region). Thus, Swami Shiv Dayal Singh writes:

Saints continually enjoy *Dīwali* in *sat lok*.

*Swami Shiv Dayal Singh, Sār Bachan Poetry 38:5.32, SBP p.341*

And likewise Tukārām:

For us devotees, every day is *Dīwali*!

Our joy is fearless, for the Lord protects us!

Tukārām says: “Let there be no fear of birth and death!”

Being with the Lord is the permanent desire of all devotees.

*Tukārām, Abhang 3949, SSG2 p.1082, in SSII pp.276–77*

**dogma** (Gk. *dogma*) A belief, doctrine or principle, or a code of the same, regarded as fundamentally true; religious doctrine authorized or proclaimed as true by an appointed religious body; a tenet or belief held to be true and firmly adhered to even in the face of contrary evidence or the apparent demands of logic; the essence of a body of doctrine; the principles, regarded as basic and inviolable, upon which doctrine is founded and elaborated.

Dogmas can be of a religious, scientific, philosophical, political, or social nature. Dogma, especially religious dogma, may not necessarily be supported by the evidence of experience, though it may be based upon some degree of reality. Later discoveries may demonstrate that the ‘evidence’ forming the basis of a dogma was misunderstood or misinterpreted. One set of dogmas may at times be supplanted by another set, according to the patterns of social change and the evolution of human thought.

Dogmas can arise in many ways. Where they are the substance of religious belief, they are often crystallized as verbal formulae, often repeated as a credo. They may also be founded upon a misunderstanding, literalization or externalization of a mystic experience or truth. Belief and opinion can become dogma through the power of continued repetition. Dogma, once entrenched,

is usually difficult to uproot. One of the fundamental characteristics of the mind is habit – the constant repetition of what has gone before – and even though new evidence may come to light that challenges an old belief, the nature of the mind is such that experience is often overridden by strong habitual belief – *i.e.* dogma. For this reason, dogmas that have evolved and changed over time, such as those of science, can take time to be supplanted. It is generally reckoned, for instance, that radically new conceptual frameworks in science can take up to fifty years or two generations before being universally accepted, because it takes that long for those entrenched in the old dogmas to have retired or died.

Doctrine is the attempt to elaborate upon dogma or elucidate it in rational terms. Thus, the basic dogmas of *karma* and reincarnation have resulted in different doctrines or elaborations in Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism. Indeed, the doctrines of all traditions have evolved with time, though the underlying dogmas may not. That is, the understanding of the interpretation of a dogma can change, according to the changing mindset, social circumstances, culture, and so on.

Considered rationally, dogma and doctrine will always suffer from the problem of being founded upon a primal, unreasoned belief that is taken as the truth. The fundamental dogma of atheistic science, for example, is that there is nothing but matter in existence. Religion, on the other hand, presumes the *prima-facie* existence of God as the fundamental Reality, however that 'Reality' may be understood. But neither dogma can be demonstrated satisfactorily by one person to another.

In fact, all human knowledge, belief or dogma is founded upon the undemonstrable premise that the human mind is capable of determining truth. The human quest for knowledge and understanding presumes that the workings of the mind are understood well enough to accept that its multifarious assertions can contain, resemble, describe, or be the truth. But if the nature of the human mind and consciousness is understood solely by the human mind itself, can its conclusions be relied upon? Is the attempt to understand something using something you do not understand a valid means of trying to understand the fundamentals of anything?

Mystics, who see matters from a higher level of consciousness, say that all human understanding is limited and relative. It is all effectively opinion – something seen from particular perspectives. They say that absolute knowledge and certainty is obtainable only by the experience of an expanded consciousness; that the best and most productive way of studying mind and consciousness is not by using the analytical faculty of the mind, but by an entirely different and subjective methodology that is personal and experiential. This methodology is known as meditation. Of course, at a human level, this assertion is also only a premise. Mystics therefore maintain that

the understanding of Truth or Reality will always be a matter of personal experience, and that one person's experience cannot be transferred to another through doctrine, dogma, or a formulation in words of any other kind. "Speech is at best an honest lie."<sup>1</sup>

See also: **rituals and ceremonies.**

1. *Book of Mirdad, BOM* p.68.

**du'ā'** (A), **du'ā** (P) (pl. *ad'iyah, ad'iyat*) *Lit.* call, plea, supplication, invocation; an individual, private or spontaneous prayer, spoken silently, that springs from the heart, expressing personal sentiments and petitions. A *du'ā'*, which can be made at any time, is contrasted with the set, obligatory, canonical prayer (*ṣalāh*) that is performed five times daily. Hence *du'ā'* is sometimes translated as 'free prayer'. In practice, the faithful generally follow their *ṣalāh* with a *du'ā'*, which is performed with the palms of the hands held open in an attitude of supplication. The term appears in the *Qur'ān*:

O my Lord! Make me one who establishes regular prayer (*al-ṣalāh*), and also raise such among my offspring, O our Lord! And accept this supplication (*du'ā'*) of mine.

*Qur'ān 14:40; cf. AYA*

In Sufism, *riḍā'* (contentment, satisfaction with God's will) is generally regarded as a superior attitude to *du'ā'*:

Supplication (*du'ā'*) is not a part of the *ṣūfīs'* creed. They see things in light of the Primal Command, where everything is as it has always been.

*Anṣārī, Ṭabaqāt al-Ṣūfīyah 232, TSAA p.267, in SSE3 p.87*

One group maintains that to be silent before God's decree as if dead, and to be content (*riḍā'*) with whatever has occurred through God's will, is more complete and worthier than supplication (*du'ā'*).

*Al-Qushayrī, Risālah, RQQQ p.130, in SSE3 p.88*

I know of another class of saints

whose mouths are closed to supplication (*du'ā'*).

Because of the contentment (*riḍā'*) possessed by those noble ones,

it has become unlawful for them to seek to avert destiny.

In destiny, they experience a peculiar delight:

it would be unbelief (*kufṛ*) for them to crave release.



He has so opened their hearts to see the good in all things  
that they do not go into mourning on account of misfortune.

*Rūmī, Maṣnavī III:1880–83; cf. MJR4 p.105*

For the lover, living in the will of God and the awareness of His presence is far higher than asking Him for favours:

Once, when Abū Sa‘īd al-Kharrāz was on Mount ‘Arafāt and pilgrims were engaged in supplication (*du‘ā*) and lamentation, he suddenly had the desire to do the same himself. Because there was nothing that God had not done for him, he wondered what supplication (*du‘ā*) he should make. As he experienced this urge, a voice called to him, saying, “After having found God, you still want to make supplications (*du‘ā*)?” – meaning, once you find God what more could you want of Him?

*Jāmī, Nafahāt al-Uns, NUJ p.75, in SSE3 p.88*

Once, in the state of supplication (*munājāt*), Junayd said, “O God grant me satiety from thirst!”

A voice called to him, “Do not put your self between Me and My devotee!” meaning God knows best what is appropriate for each devotee and what is each one’s worth.

Junayd later commented, “As a result of this, I regretted what I had done and sought forgiveness for it.”

*Anṣārī, in Kashf al-Asrār, KA4 p.269, in SSE3 p.88*

In any event, most supplications or prayers for the fulfilment of personal desires remain unanswered:

When Imām Ja‘far Ṣādiq was asked, “Why is it that we do not get any response when we make supplications (*du‘ā*)?” he replied, “Because you are just saying words without knowing God.”

*Al-Qushayrī, Risālah, RQQQ p.132, in SSE3 p.89*

For the mystics, inner contact with the beloved is far more satisfying than any kind of external prayer. Ḥāfiẓ says that he has exchanged his “morning prayer” for the intoxication of early morning meditation, and “supplication” has automatically dropped from his mind:

I gave up my morning prayer for the winehouse;  
I gave up the benefit of supplication (*du‘ā*) on the beloved’s way.

*Ḥāfiẓ, Dīvān, DHA p.200, DIH p.325, in SSE3 p.87; cf. DHWC (431:1) p.720*

See also: **ahl al-du‘ā’** (7.1), **ahl al-riḍā’** (7.1), **riḍā’** (►4), **walī** (7.1).

**dualism** In a religious context, the doctrine that there are two fundamentally separate and eternal forces in the universe: one good, the other evil, as opposed to one single force of divine love. A number of gnostic sects, such as the Mandeans, the Manichaeans and other early pre- and post-Christian groups, as well as Zoroastrians, are credited with this belief, though a careful study of their sacred writings, or of their origins, almost invariably reveals that their belief is due to a misunderstanding of mystic teachings.

Many mystics have taught that the supreme, absolute and nameless Being has created a positive power and a negative power (a 'devil' or 'demiurge'), both of which act according to the roles assigned to them by the Divine. In effect, however, the positive power is identified with God Himself, while the negative power is allocated a subsidiary role. But from a human perspective, what do these doctrines actually mean?

Since it is easy to accept that the nature of God and other higher powers in His creation is impossible to humanly comprehend, the doctrine may be understood more or less as a metaphorical myth or fairy tale. Nonetheless, even from a purely human and practical perspective, few people would deny that evil does exist in this world. It is clear, therefore, that if one believes in the existence of a divine Intelligence whose primary characteristics are light and love, then He must have permitted the appearance of darkness and evil, for whatever purposes He may have deemed best. In one way or another, every religion admits to this. Indeed, one of the basic difficulties facing the theologians or metaphysicians of any religion is to explain the existence of evil and suffering in a creation that is attributed to a divine Source whose essential nature is love. However well presented, the limitations of intellectual argument and philosophy are revealed as inadequate in the face of human suffering and experience.

Judaism, Christianity and Islam explain the existence of evil by reference to the activities of Satan as a fallen angel. Plato and the gnostics spoke of a demiurge, or 'creator god', who has made this and many of the higher worlds. Indian mystics speak of *Kāla* (Time, Death), the Buddha spoke of *Māra* (Pa. Death) and Zarathushtra of *Angra Mainyu* (Av), who later became *Ahriman* (Pv). In the language of the mystics, it is this negative power, by whatever name it – or he – may be called, who is responsible for negativity and suffering. Whether he is described as a fallen angel or known by any other term, it is this negative power which has resulted not only in the evil that is seen in this world, but in *all* its duality, good as well as evil. The gnostic or 'dualistic' doctrine that the negative power is actually the creator of this world is also endorsed by various other mystical traditions.

In some spiritual traditions, the negative power has been identified with the universal mind,<sup>1</sup> as the power that creates and rules not only this physical world, but the astral and causal realms as well. These are the three worlds of

the mind. Within these realms, the eternal soul is shrouded by the various bodies and aspects of the mind, and can act only through the mind.

This does not mean, however, that the negative power has a free and independent hand in all he – or it – does. He has been created by the Divine with certain powers and with a particular purpose, and he is only fulfilling that purpose. Like a prison governor, he may appear to be free in the way he runs the establishment, but actually his power is derived from a higher government, and he can only act within certain prescribed limits. The negative power, for example, is not credited with the ability either to create or to destroy a soul. His role is only to imprison the soul in the illusion of the mind worlds and in the cycle of birth and death that characterizes the physical universe.

The various sects and religions that teach – or have taught – dualism vary in the degree to which they intellectually or theologically differentiate between the good and evil powers. Even the avowedly monotheistic religions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) assign a role to Satan. In Islam, the devil (*Iblīs*) is characterized as the most strict and faithful of God's servants, but who nonetheless refused to offer obeisance to Adam – though commanded to do so by God – because man was made of clay, and he of fire.<sup>2</sup> Rūmī describes the devil as utterly “devoted to the divine decree”,<sup>3</sup> while Maṣnūʾ al-Ḥallāj writes in his *Ṭawāsīn* that Satan and Pharaoh were both his teachers.

Mystics point out that to attempt to understand the administration of creation and its divine purpose, using only the human intellect as a tool, is worse than a young child trying to understand higher mathematics. The intellectual equipment of a human being, however refined it may be, is not designed to comprehend or really know the nature and hidden processes of creation. There are higher faculties of the mind and soul capable of comprehending these realities, but they must be awakened by spiritual practice, and with the blessing and guidance of a suitable guide or master. This is the nature of gnosis.

In practice, the ordinary believers of all religions and sects – dualistic, monotheistic, or something in between – do not enter into the theological or metaphysical complexities of their belief. In many instances, their partially formed understanding of religious precepts may be quite unconsciously at variance with what the intellectual theologians who devised their theology have laid down. This, in itself, highlights the difference between human experience of daily life and intellectual abstraction – which in terms of actually going through life may have very little relevance.

From a mystical perspective, these seemingly paradoxical explanations pose no difficulties, for the universal mind – the negative power – is the source of all mystic knowledge of the lower creation. The universal mind is extremely subtle, blissful, alluring, and beguiling. Many mystics and yogis who have reached this stage on the inner journey, having no guide to take them further, have even believed that they have met and merged with the Supreme Himself. The heavens

and paradises of religion also lie within the mind worlds. The divine Word passes through the realm of the negative power, and is moulded and diversified into all creation that lies below. Acknowledging, of course, that all such descriptions are metaphorical or allegorical, Satan is actually a lover of God, and performs the divine will. He is a wise and faithful servant. He is also the teacher of the soul, for this world is a school of learning, where the one and only lesson to be learnt is that of love – divine love for God – and its expression at a human level.

Ultimately, it has to be admitted that all human philosophizing on such subjects, together with any associated mythology and symbolism, stems from the innate urge to understand the human condition – one that is constrained by the limitations of the human mind. But taken literally, such descriptions are prone to evolve into narrow, dogmatic, and dualistic thinking.

See also: **duality** (5.2).

1. See **universal mind** (6.1).
2. *Qur'ān* 7:11–12, 17:61.
3. Rūmī, *Maśnavī* V:2948; cf. *MJR* 6 p.177.

**du-gānah namāz** (P), **dogānā namāz** (U/Pu) *Lit.* two (*du*) genuflexions (*gānah*) in prayer (*namāz*); a particular form of Muslim prayer, involving two cycles of prostrations in prayer, each cycle being known as a *rak'at namāz*.

Mystics say that the highest form of prayer is meditation. Some have pointed out that ritualistic forms of prayer and worship can cloud the mind by distracting it from one-pointed concentration on the Divine. Hence, Bulleh Shāh writes that now he has met the Beloved within, he has no interest in externals:

I relinquish the mosque, I relinquish the temple.  
 I observe neither the Hindu nor the Muslim fasts.  
 I have forgotten ablutions and prostration (*dogānā*).  
 I sacrifice my life unto You.  
 I have now seen the fair Beloved (*sohna yār*).

*Bulleh Shāh, Kullīyāt 152, KBS pp.326–27, SBSU p.453, BSPS p.381*

**Durgā pūjā** (S/H) *Lit.* worship (*pūjā*) of *Durgā*; a festival held in honour of the goddess *Durgā* from the sixth to the tenth of the Hindu month of *Āshwin* (September/October); closely linked to the *Dussehra* (tenth day) or *Vijayādashamī* (victory of the tenth) festival, which takes place on the tenth day of *Āshwin* as the culmination of the ten-day *Navarātra* (nine nights) festival.

*Āshwin* is the Indian harvest season, and the blessings of *Durgā* as the mother goddess are invoked in hope of a bountiful harvest and to bring fresh fertility

to the earth for the next season's crops. Various ceremonies are performed to focus cosmic, life-giving forces upon the land. Colourful rituals also dramatize the triumph of good over evil by the victory of *Durgā* over the demons.

See also: **Durgā** (4.2), **pūjā**.

**Easter** (Gk. *Pascha*) The first and principal festival of the Christian calendar, celebrating the crucifixion of Jesus (Good Friday), his descent into hell (He. *Sheol*, Gk. *Hadēs*), and his resurrection three days later (Easter Sunday) – events that lie at the heart of the Christian doctrine and faith; a movable feast, fixed annually by reference to a lunisolar calendar derived from the Hebrew calendar, to which all other movable feasts are related, except Advent; preceded by Lent, a forty-day period of prayer, penance, and fasting; a festival founded upon the concluding stories in the four New Testament gospels. Easter Sunday is also called Resurrection Sunday. Social and religious customs associated with Easter vary throughout the Christian world. The Greek *Pascha* is derived from the Aramaic *Paksha*, which is cognate with the Hebrew *Pesaḥ* (Passover).

The timing of the feast was the subject of considerable disagreement during the first few centuries of Christianity. In his *Church History*, Eusebius provides the earliest indication of a dispute, which to some extent still continues:

A question of no small importance arose at that time (*i.e.* the time of Pope Victor, about 190 CE). The dioceses of all Asia, as from an older tradition, held that the fourteenth day of the moon, on which day (Passover) the Jews were commanded to sacrifice the lamb, should always be observed as the feast of the life-giving *Pascha*, contending that the fast ought to end on that day, whatever day of the week it might happen to be. However, it was not the custom of the churches in the rest of the world to end it at this point, as they observed the practice, which from apostolic tradition has prevailed to the present time, of terminating the fast on no other day than on that of the resurrection of our saviour. Synods and assemblies of bishops were held on this account, and all with one consent through mutual correspondence drew up an ecclesiastical decree that the mystery of the resurrection of the Lord should be celebrated on no other day but the Sunday and that we should observe the close of the paschal fast on that day only.

*Eusebius, Church History 5:23, in "Easter controversy,"  
Catholic Encyclopedia, CERA*

After the Reformation in sixteenth-century Europe, the newly formed Protestant churches accepted or rejected different aspects of Easter, as celebrated by the Catholic Church. Some, especially the various Puritan

movements, entirely rejected the festival, while others, such as the Lutheran, Methodist and Anglican Churches, accepted the majority of its observances and traditions.

From a spiritual rather than ritualistic or doctrinal perspective, any spiritual benefit to be derived from the observance of Easter or any other religious festival will arise from an individual's devotional and meditative attitude of mind. As the German Lutheran Friedrich Christoph Oetinger (1702–1782), a mystically minded theologian and philosopher, observes:

If Christ ... appears in essence in me, and if the mind of His child is sensed in my activities and surrendering, then I celebrate Christmas. It is Easter if my spirit proceeds triumphant through all suffering, death, and hell. I celebrate Ascension if I receive meanwhile the freedom to sweep myself up to God, my Source. I celebrate Pentecost if grace is poured out from the heights into my heart through the Holy Spirit.

*Friedrich Christoph Oetinger, A Confession of Faith,  
in OLBE p.182; cf. in PSWE p.276*

See also: **cross**, **Lamb** (7.1), **resurrection**, **second coming**.

**ekādashī, ekādasī** (S/H/Pu), **ekādashī-vrat(a)** (S/H), **ekādasī brat** (Pu) *Lit.* vow (*vrata*) of the eleventh (*ekādashī*); a vow of fasting on the eleventh day of every fortnight of a lunar month. *Ekādashī* is a day of fasting, thought to earn significant religious merit in traditional Hinduism.

Mystics say that fasting and all outer observances are like beating the kennel (the body), while the dog (the mind) goes undisciplined. The mind is not purified by these means. In fact, external practices may distract the mind and provide activity for it, successfully keeping it away from inner devotion and meditation. According to Nāmdev:

I have stopped fasting  
on the eleventh day of each month (*ekādasī brat*);  
Why should I bother to go on pilgrimages to sacred shrines?  
Prays Nāmdev, I have become a man of good deeds and good thoughts.

*Nāmdev, Ādi Granth 718, AGK*

In his characteristically forthright manner, Kabīr says much the same concerning all external rituals. Kabīr and Nāmdev were both writing at a time when the Indian people were greatly influenced by the religious authorities, especially Hindu and Muslim, who promoted ritual, ceremony, and dogma as essential aspects of life:

If the Lord *Allāh* lives only in the mosque,  
 then to whom does the rest of the world belong?  
 According to the Hindus, the Lord's Name abides in the idol,  
 but there is no truth in either of these claims.  
 O *Allāh*, O *Rām*, I live by Your Name:  
 please show mercy to me, O master.

The God of the Hindus lives in the southern lands,  
 and the God of the Muslims lives in the west.  
 So search in your heart – look deep into your heart of hearts:  
 this is the home and the place where God lives.

The *brāhmaṇs* observe twenty-four fasts (*i.e. ekādasī*) during the year,  
 and the *qāzīs* fast during the month of *Ramaḍān*.  
 The Muslims set aside eleven months,  
 and claim that the treasure is only in the one month.

What is the use of bathing at Orissa?  
 Why do the Muslims bow their heads in the mosque?  
 If someone has deception in his heart,  
 what good is it for him to utter prayers?  
 And what good is it for him to go on pilgrimage to Mecca?

You fashioned all these men and women, Lord:  
 all these are Your forms.  
 Kabīr is the child of God, *Allāh*, *Rām*:  
 all the *gurus* and prophets are mine.

Says Kabīr, listen, O men and women:  
 seek the sanctuary of the One.  
 Chant the *Nām*, the Name of the Lord, O mortals,  
 and you shall surely be carried across.

*Kabīr, Ādi Granth 1349, AGK*

Guru Arjun and Guru Nānak say that the real *ekādasī* is love for God, and  
 seeing Him everywhere:

(On) the eleventh (*ekādasī*) day, enshrine the one Lord within your heart:  
 eradicate cruelty, egotism and emotional attachment.

*Guru Nānak, Ādi Granth 840, AGK*

(On) the eleventh (*ekādasī*) (day of the lunar cycle):  
 behold the Lord, the Lord near at hand.

Subdue the desires of your sexual organs, and listen to the Lord's Name.  
 Let your mind be content and be kind to all beings.  
 In this way, your fast will be successful.

*Guru Arjun, Ādi Granth 299, AGK*

See also: **fasting**.

**Eucharist** (Gk. *Eucharistia*, from *eucharistos*, thankful) One of the central rites of Christian worship; the Christian sacrament in which the last supper of Jesus with his disciples is commemorated by an officiating priest, who blesses bread and wine or bread and water, which are then consumed by the congregation; also called, holy communion, the Sacrament. In Roman Catholicism and in the Orthodox Church, the bread and wine are believed to be 'transubstantiated' into Jesus' flesh and blood; that is, their entire substance is converted into the entire substance of Jesus' body and blood. François de Sales expresses his faith very clearly:

Our Lord instituted the Eucharist, which truly contains his flesh and blood, so that "if anyone eats of this bread, he shall live forever."<sup>1</sup> Those who often receive this sacrament devoutly so strengthen their soul that it is almost impossible for them to be poisoned by any evil inclinations, for they cannot be nourished with this living flesh and at the same time be disposed towards spiritual death. . . . By adoring and feeding on beauty, purity and goodness itself in the Eucharist you will become altogether beautiful, pure, and good.

*François de Sales, Devout Life 2:20–21, IDL pp.81–82, 86*

Jean-Pierre de Caussade describes the Eucharist as the "mystery of mysteries":

It remains the mystery of mysteries in which all is so secret, unseen and incomprehensible that the more spiritual and enlightened we are, the more faith we need to believe.

*J.-P. de Caussade, Sacrament of the Present Moment 11, SPM p.123*

The beliefs of other branches of Christianity concerning the Eucharist vary widely. Quakerism rejects the Eucharist altogether, while various Protestant traditions accept the ceremony only as an expression of faith. The Protestant reformer John Calvin accepted the spiritual presence of the living Christ in the sacrament, but rejected any transformation of the bread and wine. The Eastern Orthodox Church is largely in agreement with the Roman Catholic position, except that while Catholicism maintains that the recitation of the words constitutes the sacrament, the Orthodox Church teaches that it is the



invocation of the Holy Spirit that brings about the transubstantiation. This variety of doctrine and opinion concerning the Eucharist has made it a central issue for the ecumenical movement, which seeks to create harmony among Christian groups.<sup>2</sup>

The sacrament is traditionally considered to have been initiated by Jesus at the last supper he ate with his disciples, as described by Mark and copied by Matthew and Luke. The rite clearly had an early origin, for it is mentioned by Paul, assuming the authenticity of the passage, in one of his letters.<sup>3</sup> Mark's version reads:

And as they did eat, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and broke it, and gave to them, and said, "Take, eat: this is my body." And he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them: and they all drank of it. And he said unto them, "This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many. Verily I say unto you, I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine, until that day that I drink it new in the kingdom of God." And when they had sung a hymn, they went out into the Mount of Olives.

*Mark 14:22–26, KJV*

Matthew's version<sup>4</sup> is essentially a direct copy of Mark, while Luke, with his penchant for paraphrase, has Jesus bless the "cup" and have it passed around *before* the meal. This is followed by Jesus' blessing of the bread, to which he adds the words that have come into the Christian sacrament, "Do this in remembrance of me." Then after supper, Jesus again passes around the cup, telling them, "This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you."<sup>5</sup>

The authenticity of this story and the accuracy with which Jesus' words were recorded rests entirely with Mark who was not an eyewitness, but was writing some thirty to forty-five years later. In fact, at face value, it is not at all clear what is meant by Jesus' words, if indeed he actually said them.

Turning to John's gospel for elucidation, it is surprising to find that John records absolutely nothing concerning any conversation that Jesus may have had at his last supper with the disciples. His narrative reads:

Now before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end. And supper being ended, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him. . . .

*John 13:1–2, KJV*

Jesus then takes a basin of water and begins to wash his disciples' feet. As in many other instances, the compiler of John's gospel – who would have

been aware of the contents of the other gospels – relates a different story. In an earlier part of John’s gospel, however, he provides more than a hint of the origins and meaning of the last supper ‘conversation’, as recorded in the synoptic gospels. Jesus, as is characteristic of John’s gospel, is speaking as the *Logos*, the divine Word, when he says:

I am the Bread of Life;  
He who comes to me will never hunger;  
and he who believes in me will never thirst.

*John 6:35; cf. KJV*

And again:

I am the Living Bread that came down from heaven:  
If any man eat of this Bread,  
he will live forever.

*John 6:51, KJV*

The “Living Bread” or the “Bread of Life” are metaphors for the divine Word that sustains and nourishes all life. It is the source of all being and existence in the creation. This is clear enough, but Jesus then continues:

The Bread that I will give is my flesh,  
which I will give for the life of the world. . . .  
Verily, verily, I say unto you,  
unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man,  
and drink his blood, you have no life in you.  
Whoever eats my flesh, and drinks my blood, has eternal life,  
and I will raise him up at the last day.

For my flesh is meat indeed,  
and my blood is drink indeed.  
He who eats my flesh, and drinks my blood,  
dwells in me, and I in him.  
As the living Father has sent me, and I live by the Father:  
so he who eats me, even he will live by me.  
This is that Bread that came down from heaven: . . .  
he who eats of this Bread will live forever.

*John 6:51, 53–58; cf. KJV*

Though the metaphor is a very strange one – eating the flesh and drinking the blood of another – the meaning again seems clear. What gives substance and life – flesh and blood – to a master, the “Son of Man”, is the Word. A

master, therefore, is the “Bread which came down from heaven”; he is the “Word made flesh”. And one who drinks that blood and eats that flesh is one who comes into contact with such a master and through him is enabled to experience inner communion with the real essence of a master – the Word, the “Living Bread”.

But why did Jesus choose such a grisly metaphor? Few suggestions have been proffered on this point, perhaps because its later use in Christian ritual has been so crucial to Christian practice and belief. The most probable answer would seem that it is associated with John’s metaphor of the Lamb of God being given as a sacrifice for sins.<sup>6</sup>

John’s gospel is primarily mystical and focuses on the work of the *Logos* in this world. So it is also possible that this part of Jesus’ conversation was inserted at a later date. In early times, there was considerable opposition to the inclusion of John’s gospel in the Christian canon. Since many scholars regard the last two chapters of *John* as later additions, there is good reason to believe that other parts of the gospel were also tampered with in order to bring it into line with already established dogma.

Jewish and pagan custom at the time of Jesus involved the ritual slaughter of lambs, sheep, oxen and other animals for the supposed purpose of appeasing God or some lesser deity, for invoking forgiveness of sin or for seeking blessings upon some undertaking. The flesh of these animals was then eaten and, in some rituals, the blood was even drunk by the priests. Though to a modern mind, the practice may seem abhorrent, such sacrifices were an essential aspect of many religions of those times. During special festivities, such as the Passover, the precincts of the Jewish Temple and other ‘holy’ temples ran with the blood of slaughtered animals. The priests waded literally ankle deep in blood; and a gutter drained the blood out of the temple, through the city, out to a place where it was dried and sold to farmers. It must have been a considerable source of revenue.

Naturally, mystics are against such practices, for how can God be worshipped and His forgiveness obtained by the killing of His creatures – causing them untold fear and suffering – and then feasting upon their dead remains? Rather, such things coarsen the mind, turning it far away from God, generating a heavy burden of sin and *karma*. Hence Jesus, Paul and many others spoke out against the sacrificial killing of animals. And as a part of his exhortation to abandon ritual slaughtering and feasting, Jesus observed that the only sacrifice which genuinely resulted in the atonement of sin was the sacrifice of the Son of Man, the Lamb of God, the master, by his coming to this world and taking on the sins of his disciples. Similarly, the only consumption of flesh and blood that appeased or pleased the Lord, leading to His true love and worship, was symbolically to eat the “flesh” and drink the “blood” of this “Son of Man”, the “Word made flesh” – not that of innocent animals.

### *Eucharistic Imagery*

The synoptic account of the last supper seems to combine the blessing of food by Jesus – something that he may well have done whenever he sat down to eat with his disciples – with metaphors concerning the Word as the Living Bread, the Living Water, and the divine Wine. These metaphors are commonly found in early Christian literature, especially the apocryphal acts, which are remarkable for their use of symbolism and allegory. Even the stories of seemingly ritualistic baptism and Eucharist may be only an allegorical structure upon which to hang spiritual truths, for they are usually accompanied by short discourses where the external rites are given an inner mystical interpretation. There is, for instance, Judas Thomas' blessing of bread:

Living Bread, the eaters of which die not!  
Bread, that fills hungry souls with your blessing!

*Acts of Thomas 133; cf. AAA p.268, ANT p.422*

Judas is ostensibly blessing ordinary bread, but the words he utters refer to the mystic reality. Such words, of course, echo those of John's gospel and there are many such references in the ancient literature. In *Joseph and Aseneth*, an allegorical romance from early Christian times, in a symbolic reference to baptism, Aseneth is told:

From today, you will be renewed  
and refashioned and made alive again,  
and you will eat the blessed Bread of Life,  
and drink the blessed Cup of Immortality,  
and be anointed with the blessed Unction of Incorruption.

*Joseph and Aseneth 15, DR p.135*

There is no hint in this story of any external rite. The "Bread of Life", the "Cup of Immortality" and the "Unction of Incorruption" are all metaphors for the Word through which disciples are "renewed" or "born again" when they receive initiation. Then they are "made alive again"; they are "refashioned" and enabled to repent, to change their way of being, inwardly, and begin the journey homewards. The meaning is entirely mystical and inward, as it is in John's gospel.

In the Manichaean literature, too, the same metaphors are used devoid of any eucharistic setting:

He gave the Bread of Life to the hungry,  
clothing he brought to the naked.

*Manichaean Psalm Book CCXXVIII; cf. MPB p.23*

Here, the hungry are the people of this world. All are spiritually hungry, naked of the true garment of radiance that is the soul's natural heritage.

In fact, bread, water and wine were all used as mystic metaphors for the Word. Water meant the Living Water of the Word, while Wine is either the Word or refers to the sweet intoxication of divine love and bliss experienced through mystic communion. Wine is a universally encountered mystic simile, not only found among the early Christian liturgies, as well as the gnostic and Manichaean writings, but also of the later Sufis of Islam. All of these lead to the opinion that the external ritual of the Eucharist is an externalization of a mystic reality.

In the *Acts of Thomas*, Living Bread or "Immortal Food", the "Wine that gives . . . neither thirst nor desire", the "Living Spirit", the "Truth" and "Wisdom" are all equated when Judas Thomas describes the "Father of all" as:

(He) whose proud light they have received,  
 and are enlightened by the sight of their Lord;  
 (He) whose Immortal Food they have received, that never fails,  
 and have drunk of the Wine  
 that gives them neither thirst nor desire.  
 And they have glorified and praised,  
 with the Living Spirit,  
 the Father of Truth and the Mother of Wisdom.

*Acts of Thomas 7; cf. ANT pp.367–68*

An early Christian hymn of the late fourth-century Syrian, Cyrillonas, also provides a pointedly mystical interpretation of Jesus' last supper:

This is the Vine that gives to mankind  
 a drink from which they obtain eternal life.  
 This is the Vine that drinking which  
 comforts the souls of the mourners.  
 This is the Vine that through its Wine  
 purifies creation from iniquity.

It is the cluster that pressed itself out  
 at eventide in the upper chamber,  
 and gave itself in the cup to his disciples  
 as the testament of Truth.

O Vine, how strong are you –  
 you whose riches never fail.

*Cyrillonas, Hymns, GC p.580; cf. MEM p.134*

The “Vine” is the Word, being the same as Jesus’ “True Vine” in John’s gospel.<sup>7</sup> The “Wine” from this “Vine” “purifies creation from iniquity” – undoubtedly a reference to the Word, for no worldly wine, even in the hands of a priest, could be expected to perform such a function.

It is also that which was drunk “at eventide in the upper chamber” and “gave itself in the cup to his disciples”. This is an interesting allusion to the last supper, for the “upper chamber” in which Jesus is supposed to have eaten the last supper with his disciples is here given a mystical meaning, too. It refers to the sanctuary within, where the spiritual beloved is met, and where this “cup” is to be truly found and drunk.

It is also the “testament of Truth” – the covenant of Truth and the means of knowing the Truth. Again, this is a reference to the Word, and it explains Jesus’ otherwise mysterious words in Mark:

This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many.

*Mark 14:24, KJV*

The Word is the ever-new “testament” or covenant, the eternal ‘agreement’ or bond between God and man. It is “shed for many” in the sense that a master’s life, as a personification of the Word, is given as a sacrifice for his disciples.

In a Nestorian eucharistic liturgy, it is clear that although the ritual was practised externally, the hope was that the bread and the wine would take on the character of their higher mystic counterpart:

Behold, the Medicine of Life,  
which descended from on high,  
is dispensed in the church,  
and is hidden in the sacraments,  
in the bread and wine.

Put forth now your hands, you who are dying,  
and have taken up your abode in *Sheol*  
on account of your sins;  
Take and be forgiven, and attain unto life,  
and reign with Christ, and sing and say:  
“Hallelujah, this is the Bread of which  
if any man shall eat he shall escape hell.”

*Nestorian Liturgy; cf. NR2 pp.167–68*

Those “who are dying” are the souls of this world, those who “have taken up (their) abode in *Sheol* on account of (their) sins”. It is evident that the writer of this liturgy understands that it is the mystic Bread and Wine that will forgive the sins of the “dying”, permitting the soul to escape from the “hell” of this

world. Clearly, it is hoped that such power can be transferred into earthly food, as has been commonly believed in some branches of Christianity, even to the present day.

In another extract from early Christian writings, this time from the fifth- or perhaps sixth-century Syrian poet, Isaac of Antioch, the Eucharist is described as the “Medicine” that heals the sick and raises the dead. But once again, this “Medicine” is the divine Word that heals the soul, not the body. Here, the “Eucharist” refers to the inner, mystic communion of the soul with the Word:

She gave therefore the Medicine at last,  
the Eucharist, which heals the sick,  
brings life to the dead, and closes wounds.

*Isaac of Antioch; cf. IADS2 p.30, MEM p.146*

The writers of the Manichaean psalms were also fond of this family of metaphors, which are encountered in a number of places where the meaning is entirely mystical. Jesus, for example, is described as the “Living Wine, the child of the True Vine”:

You are the Living Wine, the child of the True Vine,  
give us to drink a Living Wine from your Vine.

*Manichaean Psalm Book; cf. MPB p.151*

In another psalm, there is an allusion to the Eucharist, when the psalmist says that the Holy Spirit has “brought the cup of Water”:

The Holy Spirit has come to us. . . .  
He has brought the cup of Water,  
he has given it to his church also.

*Manichaean Psalm Book; cf. MPB p.184*

In another, the “Son of the living God, the physician of souls” is likened to the “sweet spring of Water” and the “True Vine” that springs from the “Living Wine”:

The Son of the living God,  
the physician of souls,  
come, sing to him, the saviour of spirits. . . .  
(He is) the holy Bread of Life that is come from the heavens,  
the sweet Spring of Water that leaps unto life,  
the True Vine, that of the Living Wine.

*Psalms of Heracleidēs, Manichaean Psalm Book; cf. MPB p.193*

And in another, alluding to Jesus' saying concerning new wine in new bottles:<sup>8</sup>

Lo, Wisdom is flourishing:  
 where is there an ear to hear it?  
 Lo, the new Wine we have found:  
 we would have new bottles for it.

*Manichaean Psalm Book, MPB p.153*

The ever-new and eternally fresh wine of the Word or Wisdom can only find a place in a freshly cleaned and renewed human heart. It can never come to dwell in old “bottles”, full with the sins of innumerable past lives and the ingrained habits of ritualistic and ceremonial worship. This saying of Jesus, then, is another instance in which he uses the metaphor of wine with a mystic meaning. Similarly, in a passage that echoes lines from both *Proverbs* and the *Song of Songs*:

Wisdom invites you,  
 that you may eat with your spirit.  
 Lo, the new Wine has been broached:  
 Lo, the cups have been brought in.  
 Drink what you shall drink,  
 gladness surrounding you.  
 Eat that you may eat,  
 being glad in your spirit.

*Manichaean Psalm Book, MPB p.158*

In all these contexts, the eating and drinking refer to the spiritual nature of man, the soul taking nourishment and sustenance from its intoxicating contact with the Word within.

### ***Historical Origins***

There is another source from which the external aspects of the Eucharist could have been derived. Cult meals were common to a number of sects and religions in early and pre-Christian times. The Roman religion of Mithraism, who took the ancient Persian-Aryan god Mithras as their deity, was one of these. A number of modern scholars, as well as early Christian fathers, have observed that their rituals had a great many similarities to those of Christianity, including baptism for the forgiveness of sins through a rite very similar to the Eucharist. So close in character were these rituals – which predated Christianity – that the early Christian father, Tertullian (c. 160–220), was even moved to write that the devil had plagiarized (by anticipation) the later Christian rite:



It is his (the devil's) character to pervert the truth, mimicking the exact circumstances of the divine sacraments (*i.e.* the Eucharist) in the mysteries of idols.

*Tertullian, On the 'Prescription' of Heretics 40; cf. TTSP p.89, WT2 p.49*

Likewise, in the mid-second century, Justin Martyr wrote of the eucharistic sacrament of the body and the cup

which the wicked devils have imitated in the mysteries of Mithras, commanding the same things to be done.

*Justin Martyr, First Apology 66; cf. WJMA p.65*

The more historical assumption is that the ritualistic details of the Christian Eucharist were at least partially introduced by Roman converts familiar with the older Mithraic ritual. This is in keeping with the way in which religious customs come into existence. Beliefs and practices of extant religions are incorporated, with or without modification, into the new, though they too may have a lost or hidden esoteric meaning.

### ***Water or Wine?***

It is significant that although Mark's gospel, followed by *Matthew* and *Luke*, has Jesus speak of the "fruit of the vine", it is not stated whether this was wine or grape juice. Similarly, the discourse in *John* identifies no particular drink as symbolic of the 'blood of the Son of Man'. Even in St Paul's mention of the Eucharist, only the "cup" is mentioned – not wine.<sup>9</sup> The significance lies in the alcoholic content of wine and the fact that John the Baptist<sup>10</sup> and many early Christian and other spiritual groups abstained from alcohol. Abstention from intoxicants has generally been a part of mystic teachings, so did Jesus do so, too?

Later custom presumed that the drink was wine, which has come down to the present time, traditionally mixed with water. But in many early Christian writings, the eucharistic drink is very firmly stated to be that of water alone. In the *Acts of John*, the *Acts of Paul*, the *Acts of Peter* and other apocryphal literature, it is almost always bread and water that is offered by the apostles as blessed food and drink. For example:

Now they brought bread and water to Paul for the (eucharistic) sacrifice, so that he might make prayer and distribute it to everyone.

*Acts of Peter III:2; cf. ANT p.304*

And again:

(And Paul) broke bread and brought water also, and gave her to drink with a word.

*Acts of Paul (Hamburg papyrus), ANT p.573*

Sometimes, it is only bread:

He (John) broke the bread and gave to all of us, praying over each of the brethren that he might be worthy of the grace of the Lord and of the most holy Eucharist.

*Acts of John 110; cf. ANT p.268*

In the *Acts of Thomas*, the taking of blessed bread and water almost invariably follows baptism:

And when she was baptized and clad, he (Judas Thomas) broke bread and took a cup of water, and made her a partaker in the body of Christ and the cup of the Son of God.

*Acts of Thomas 121; cf. ANT p.418*

In fact, while the Greek text of the *Acts of Thomas* never speaks of wine as a part of the Eucharist, wine has been added to a *later* Syriac text in some places. The Greek, for example, reads:

And when they were baptized, . . . he set bread on the table and blessed it.

*Acts of Thomas 133, ANT p.422*

While the corresponding Syriac has:

And when they were baptized, . . . he brought bread and wine, and placed it on the table, and began to bless it.

*Acts of Thomas, AAA p.268*

Yet, significantly, a fragment from a much *earlier* Syriac text has the same wording *omitting* the words “and wine”.<sup>11</sup>

The same editorial process can be observed in the later Ethiopic version of the *Acts of Thomas* where wine has again been slipped into the translation when only water is present in the Greek and Syriac texts. So while the Greek reads:

He laid his hands on them and blessed them, and broke the bread of the Eucharist and gave it to them.

*Acts of Thomas 29; cf. ANT p.377*

The Ethiopic, demonstrating a characteristically verbose and loose translation throughout, has:

And he took pure bread and a cup full of wine, he gave thanks, and broke the bread, and gave to the people that had been baptized of the body of our Lord and of his precious blood.

*Acts of Thomas 28, AA p.52*

This tendency can be observed in other ancient documents, too, as between the Greek text of the *Acts of John* and the Syriac. The Greek contains no mention of wine, while the Syriac does. It was so easy in those days to alter texts to fit changing beliefs and practices. It is noticeable, too, that the changes are almost invariably in the direction of descent and decline, away from the self-control, natural discipline and spirituality of the true mystic teachings. This trend is almost a principle that can be used to determine which is the older and more reliable reading when faced with variant texts.

There is no doubt that some of the early Christian groups used only bread and water in their Eucharist. Groups such as the Ebionites (Judaic Christians) who lasted into the fifth century, representing the descendants of some of Jesus' direct disciples in Palestine, are well known to have abstained from 'strong drink'. Epiphanius (C4th) writes:

(The Judaic Christians) also ... celebrate the mysteries year after year, ... in imitation of the sacred mysteries (Eucharist) of the Church, using unleavened bread, and the other part of the mystery, using water only.

*Epiphanius, Panarion 2:16.1; cf. PES pp.131–32*

Similarly, concerning the mid-second-century gnostic teacher, Marcion, Epiphanius complains, "he uses water in the mysteries (the Eucharist)".<sup>12</sup> In fact, it would be no surprise if many of the mystically inclined had not practised the external eucharistic ritual at all. The early second-century father, Ignatius, certainly writes of such a group in his *Epistle to the Smyrnaeans*:

They abstain from Eucharist and prayer, because they do not confess that the Eucharist is the flesh of our saviour Jesus Christ who suffered for our sins.

*Ignatius, To the Smyrnaeans 7:1; cf. AF1 pp.258–59*

The first half of his letter is largely taken up with a warning against 'heretical' teachers, which he castigates as "unbelievers" and "beasts in the form of men whom you must not only not receive, but, if it is possible, not even meet".<sup>13</sup> It is clear from the context that he speaking of the more mystically oriented groups of early Christians.

This lack of belief in the efficacy of the Eucharist, as a rite, has always had its proponents. Adherents of Messalianism, a late fourth-century monastic movement in Syria, rejected all Christian rites and sacraments except prayer. Fasting, asceticism, baptism, the Eucharist, the institution of the Church – all these were deemed superfluous. Only prayer can drive out the devil who dwells in every person. It is not such an antiquated notion. Over the centuries, many have sought to retrieve the essential spirituality from Jesus’ teachings, separating it from the accretions of religious tradition. The modern equivalent of this radical back-to-basics approach is to be found, perhaps, in the Quaker movement, which began in the mid-seventeenth century.

See also: **Bread** (3.1), **Lamb** (7.1), **Living Wine** (3.1), **Pihta, sacrament, water into wine** (►4).

1. *John* 6:58.
2. See “eucharist,” *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 2001.
3. *1 Corinthians* 11:20–29.
4. *Matthew* 26:26ff.
5. *Luke* 22:17–20; cf. *KJV*.
6. *John* 1:29.
7. *John* 15:1–8.
8. *Matthew* 9:17.
9. *1 Corinthians* 11:25.
10. *Luke* 1:15, 7:33.
11. *Acts of Thomas*, MAA p.231.
12. Epiphanius, *Panarion* I:III.42.3, *PES* p.274.
13. Ignatius, *To the Smyrnaeans* 2:1, 4:1, *AFI* pp.252–55.

**fǎhào** (C) *Lit. dharma* (fǎ) name (hào); a religious name given to a Daoist or Chinese Buddhist; in Daoism, the same as a *dàohào* (Daoist name), referring to a monastic name or ritual appellation; broadly synonymous with *fǎmíng* (religious name). Such names may be self-chosen, given by a master, or bestowed posthumously.

See also: **dàohào**, **fǎmíng**, **zì**.

**fǎmíng** (C) *Lit. dharma* (fǎ) name (míng); a religious name given to a Buddhist or Daoist; broadly synonymous with *dàohào* (Daoist name) and *fǎhào* (*dharma* name, religious name). In a monastic setting, Daoists of the *Quánzhēn* school as well as Buddhists generally use a lineage generation or religious name (*fǎmíng*) as their only name. By contrast, ordinands of the *Zhèngyī* (formerly

known as *Tiānshī* school, keep their birth name and take an additional Daoist surname (*dàohào*) that also indicates their lineage.

See also: **dàohào, fǎhào, zì.**

**fǎpài** (C) *Lit.* teaching (*fǎ*) school (*pài*); *dharma* school; a sect, school, or lineage in Daoism or Chinese Buddhism; sometimes abbreviated to *pài*.

**fasting** Abstinence from all or certain foods for a particular period for spiritual, ascetic, ritualistic, or other religious or ethical purposes; a practice enjoined in Jewish, Christian, Manichaeism, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist and Jain traditions, in fact practically all religions with the exception of Zoroastrianism, which teaches that fasting does not help in the struggle against evil; a practice used by many ancient cults and religions to prepare priests and others for an approach to the gods; a prevalent ascetic practice designed to mortify and thereby gain control over the demands and needs of the body and the senses. Periodic fasting is also considered helpful by some for the maintenance of good health.

In the mystery religions of the ancient Hellenistic world, it was believed that the gods would reveal divine secrets in dreams or visions only after a period of dedicated fasting. Likewise, the priests and shamans of a number of indigenous religions fast before conducting major ceremonies in order to help induce altered states of consciousness.

Judaism developed particular dietary and fasting laws, many of which were prevalent at the time of Jesus. People would also announce the fact that they were fasting by adopting certain ritual expressions and by otherwise exhibiting the fact to others. Jesus therefore instructs his disciples:

When you fast, be not, as the hypocrites,  
 of a sad countenance:  
 For they disfigure their faces,  
 that they may appear unto men to fast.  
 Verily I say unto you, they have their reward.

*Matthew 6:16; cf. KJV*

Since ostentatious fasting only increases an individual's self-consciousness and vanity, it is unlikely to bring them any closer to God. Their only 'reward' will be the esteem of others. Jesus continues:

But you, when you fast, anoint your head,  
 and wash your face;

That you appear not unto men to fast,  
 but to your Father which is in secret:  
 And your Father, who sees in secret,  
 will reward you openly.

*Matthew 6:17–18; cf. KJV*

He counsels them to make no outward show of anything they may do in their quest for God. God is within and sees everything “in secret”; it is also “in secret”, within a soul, that He will shower His real blessings and grace. This is His “open reward” to a soul, for the soul is fully conscious of such grace.

Fasting and prayer were a common tradition in early Christianity and are retained in certain Catholic rituals even to the present day. Eating lightly and an empty stomach are helpful in keeping the mind alert and vigilant in spiritual practice. Considerable energy is required for digesting food, drawing the mind down into the body, making it difficult to concentrate. But in the *Gospel of Thomas*, Jesus makes it clear that real fasting is to detach the mind from the world:

Jesus said:

“Unless you fast from the world,  
 you will in no wise find the kingdom of God.”

*Gospel of Thomas 38:27; cf. NHS20 pp.64–65, SOL p.10*

Jesus’ observations concerning fasting echo those of Isaiah, and were no doubt intended as an explanation of his predecessor’s teaching. The writer of the early Christian *Epistle of Barnabas* quotes Isaiah directly, making the same point. The real fast or abstinence, he says, is not for a man to humble himself externally and to make a show of it to others, but to abstain from or to renounce all waywardness of mind and incorrect outward behaviour. To demonstrate his meaning, he again turns to Isaiah for support:<sup>1</sup>

To them, he (Isaiah) says then again concerning these things, “Why do you fast for Me,” says the Lord, “so that your voice is heard this day with a cry! This is not the fast which I choose,” says the Lord, “not a man humbling his soul (abasing himself externally); nor though you bend your necks as a hoop, and put on sackcloth, and make your bed of ashes – not even then can you call it an acceptable fast.”

But to us he says, “Behold this is the fast which I choose,” says the Lord, “loose every bond of wickedness, set loose the fastenings of harsh agreements, send away the bruised in forgiveness, and tear up every unjust contract, give your bread to the hungry, and if you see a naked man clothe him, bring the homeless into your house, and

if you see a humble man, despise him not, neither you nor any of the household of your seed.

“Then will your light break forth as the dawn, and your robes will rise quickly, and your righteousness will go before you, and the glory of God will surround you. Then you will cry and God will hear you. While you are still speaking, He will say, ‘Lo, I am here’; if you discard slavery, and violence, and slander, and give your bread to the poor with a cheerful heart, and have pity upon the soul that is abased.”

So then, brethren, the long-suffering one (Jesus) foresaw that the people whom he prepared in his Beloved (God) should believe in guilelessness, and made all things plain to us beforehand, so that we should not be shipwrecked by conversion to their law (observances).

*Epistle of Barnabas III:1–6; cf. AF1 pp.346–49*

Christian customs regarding fasting differ between the various Churches; and individual monastic orders may also impose additional rules. The Protestant Church has largely deemed fasting to be a matter of personal choice. In the Roman Catholic Church, the rules were complex and extensive, with many days in the calendar set aside for fasting. But to accommodate modern times, since the second Vatican Council (1962–1965), mandatory observances have been relaxed, with obligatory fasts only on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday.

In early Christian times, fasting was an integral part of Christian life. Christians were expected to fast at least twice a week, on Wednesdays and Fridays, but not on the Sabbath, which was strictly prohibited. Some no doubt fasted for considerably longer periods. In the *Didachē*, the earliest known manual of Christian conduct, an interpretation of Jesus’ saying concerning the fasting of the “hypocrites” provides the rationale behind the custom of the biweekly fast:

Let not your fasts be with the hypocrites. Since they fast on Mondays and Thursdays, you should fast on Wednesdays and Fridays.

*Didachē 8:1; cf. AF1 pp.320–21*

In many instances, such fasting implied eating only one meal a day, either at midday or in the evening, and there were dispensations covering sickness and pregnancy. Generally, meat was also prohibited on fast days. Bar Hebraeus, writing long after, in the thirteenth century, speaks of three degrees of fasting, which he dubs “the common, the peculiar, and the more peculiar”:

The common one is this: absolutely not to eat nor to drink during the day, as is the custom of the Easterns; or, only not to eat animals or what is related to them, during the day, as is the custom of the Westerns.

They take vegetables and herbs, the former in the evening, the latter by day also.

*Bar Hebraeus, Book of the Dove 2:6, BDH p.27*

The other two kinds of fasting he describes reflect back to the original observations of Jesus: the fasting of the “solitary” includes fasting from the senses, while that of the “perfect” includes the elimination of all impure thoughts. The categorization of Bar Hebraeus summarizes the spread of Christian perspectives concerning fasting. To the early ascetic fathers, discipline and mortification of the body through fasting and the denial of its normal needs was the basis of spiritual practice, a tradition they passed down to their spiritual descendants. Thus the Nikētas Stēthatos (C11th) advises:

If it is but recently that you have embarked on the struggle for holiness and ranked yourself against the passions, you must battle unremittingly and through every kind of ascetic hardship against the spirit of self-indulgence. You must waste your flesh through fasting, sleeping on the ground, vigils and night-long prayer. You must bring your soul into a state of contrition through thinking on the torments of hell and through meditation on death; and you must through tears of repentance purge your heart of all the defilement that comes from coupling with impure thoughts and giving your assent to them.

*Nikētas Stēthatos, On the Practice of the Virtues 40, Philokalia, PCT4 p.89*

John Klimakos (c.525–606) also writes in praise of fasting:

To fast is to do violence to nature. It is to do away with whatever pleases the palate. Fasting ends lust, roots out bad thoughts, frees one from evil dreams. Fasting makes for purity of prayer, an enlightened soul, a watchful mind, a deliverance from blindness. Fasting is the door of compunction, humble sighing, joyful contrition, an end to chatter, an occasion for silence, a custodian of obedience, a lightening of sleep, health of the body, an agent of dispassion, a remission of sins, the gate, indeed, the delight of paradise.

*John Klimakos, Ladder of Ascent 14, LDAC p.169*

He does warn, however, that the results may not always be positive:

You will note that many irritable persons practise vigils, fasting, and stillness. For the devils are trying to suggest to them, under cover of penance and mourning, what is quite likely to increase their passion.

*John Klimakos, Ladder of Ascent 8, LDAC p.149*



Others, on the other hand, point out that fasting is at best only a beginning, and does not in itself confer a life of the spirit. The early father Makarios of Egypt (c.300–391) writes:

He may have fasted, kept vigils, chanted the *Psalms*, carried out every ascetic practice and acquired every virtue; but if the mystic working of the Spirit has not been consummated by grace with full consciousness and spiritual peace on the altar of his heart, all his ascetic practice is ineffectual and virtually fruitless, for the joy of the Spirit is not mystically active in his heart.

Fasting is good and so are vigils, ascetic practice and voluntary exile. But all these things are but the start, the prelude to the citizenship of heaven, so that it is altogether senseless to put one's trust merely in them.

*Makarios of Egypt, Spiritual Perfection 113–14, Philokalia, PCT3 pp.334–35*

The pithy, fourteenth-century author of the *Cloud of Unknowing* is more abrupt in his observations. So far as he is concerned, it is only the love of God that will ultimately pierce the inner darkness:

Never relinquish your firm intention: beat constantly with the keen shaft of love and longing upon the cloud of unknowing that lies between you and your God. Spurn the thought of anything less than God, and let nothing distract you from this purpose. For this is the only practice that can destroy the ground and root of sin.

You may fast as much as you like, keep a vigil far into the night, rise long before dawn, sleep on boards, discipline your body – and yes, if it were permitted (and it is not), put out your eyes, tear out your tongue, plug tightly your ears and your nose, cut off your limbs, and afflict your body with all the pain you could possibly think of – all this would not help you at all. The urge and impulse of sin would still be with you.

*Cloud of Unknowing 12; cf. CU p.55, CUCW pp.76–77, CUEU p.97*

John of the Cross puts it briefly:

It is better to conquer the tongue than to fast on bread and water.

*John of the Cross, Text 12; cf. CWJC3 p.236*

The reality is perhaps summarized by the story of an old ascetic who felt that he had got nowhere in seventy years of practice, but received a revelation when he humbled himself:

It was said of an old man that for seventy years he ate only once a week. He asked God about the interpretation of a saying of scripture, and God did not reveal it to him. He said to himself, "I have given myself so much affliction without obtaining anything, so I will go to see my brother and ask him." But while he was closing the door behind him to go to see his brother, an angel of the Lord was sent to him who said, "These seventy years you have fasted have not brought you near to God, but when you humbled yourself by going to see your brother, I was sent to tell you the meaning of this saying."

*Wisdom of the Desert Fathers 182; cf. in WDF p.50*

See also: **fasting (in Judaism)**, **ṣawm**.

1. *Isaiah* 58:4–10.

**fasting (in Judaism)** (He. *ta'anit*, *yom zom*) Literally, *ta'anit* means 'self-denial' or 'self-affliction', and hence fasting. *Yom zom* means a 'fast (*zom*) day (*yom*)'.

Fasting is mandated in the Hebrew Bible, in various rabbinic and talmudic guides, and in both medieval and modern codes of Jewish religious conduct. An entire tractate in the *Talmud* (*Tractate Ta'anit*) concerns the institution of fast days and the appropriate behaviour at such times. However, excessive fasting is discouraged in the *Talmud*, in Hasidism, and by some kabbalists and other Jewish religious teachers.

Three possible purposes of religious fasting are identified:

1. As a way of repentance.
2. As an expression of mourning.
3. As a supplication to God for a particular purpose, such as the Fast of Esther (*Ta'anit Esther*), or a *ta'anit ḥalom* (a fast after a disturbing dream), or a fast to assist one's prayers to invoke divine mercy for someone in need.<sup>1</sup>

Generally, a full fast entails a twenty-four hour abstention from all food and drink, including water, from evening until nightfall the following day. Other fasts are of shorter duration. The best-known full fast in Judaism is *Yom Kippur* ('Day of Atonement'), which falls ten days after the New Year (*Rosh Hashanah*), and is the only fast mandated in the Bible.<sup>2</sup> The only other full fast is on the ninth of the Hebrew month of *Av* (*Tish'a be-Av*). The fast of *Tish'a be-Av* was instituted in remembrance of the day when the first Jerusalem Temple was destroyed by the Babylonians (423 BCE), and the day when the Second Temple was destroyed by the Romans (69 CE). Coincidentally, this is also the day when numerous other tragedies have befallen the Jewish people, including the expulsion of the Jews from England in 1290, and from Spain in

1492, as well as the beginning of World War I, which led on to World War II and the holocaust.<sup>3</sup> The atmosphere on this fast day is quite sad and mournful.

There are several other traditional fasts that have their roots in ancient Jewish history. These include the Fast of Gedalia (*Zom Gedalia*), which laments the politically motivated assassination of Gedalia, whom the Babylonians had appointed governor of Judah;<sup>4</sup> the Tenth of *Tevet* (*Asara be-Tevet*), which commemorates the siege of Jerusalem by the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar II; and the Seventeenth of *Tammuz* (*Shiva Asar be-Tammuz*), which begins the three week mourning period ending in *Tish'a be-Av*. *Tevet* and *Tammuz* are months of the Jewish calendar, and these two fast days also commemorate the destruction of the Temple by the Babylonians and the Romans.

The Fast of Esther (*Ta'anit Esther*) was instituted on the day preceding the Holiday of *Purim*. It celebrates the day on the thirteenth of the month of *Adar* sometime during the sixth to fifth centuries BCE, when Queen Esther and the Jewish community of Shushan (Susa), Persia, fasted before approaching King Ahasuerus (Xerxes I). They pleaded with him to nullify the decree to kill all the Jews in the land, following the scheming of the evil courtier Haman. Their plea was successful and provided a precedent for instituting a fast in order to avert a catastrophe. The story takes up the bulk of the book of *Esther*.

Rabbi Shraga Simmons (b.1961) discusses fasting, with particular reference to the fast of Esther:

In Judaism, the purpose of a fast is to lower the volume on our physical pursuits in order to focus more acutely on our spiritual selves. This facilitates the process of *teshuvah* – literally ‘return’. We return to God, and to our essential state of purity....

In the biblical *Book of Esther*,<sup>5</sup> Esther agreed to see the King uninvited, and asked the Jewish people to fast for three days beforehand. Esther called for a fast, knowing that through soul-searching the Jews would forge a spiritual connection necessary to make her mission successful. And it paid off, for indeed the Almighty sees and hears everyone at their time of need.<sup>6</sup>

Similarly, there was another fast during the *Purim* story: the Jews fasted and prayed on the thirteenth of *Adar* in preparation for their defence against Haman's decree. The *Torah* prescribes that whenever a Jewish army goes to war, the soldiers should spend the previous day fasting. This ensures that when they go out to battle, the soldiers will be well-focused on the fact that success or failure is in the hands of God. And the fact that the soldiers are physically weakened when the battle begins assures that any victory cannot be attributed to physical prowess!

Rabbi Shraga Simmons, “Why Fast?”, FSSA

Traditionally, a Fast of the Firstborn (*Ta'anit be'horot*) is observed on the day before the festival of Passover. It is a fast of firstborn males commemorating the saving of firstborn Hebrew men from the plague that otherwise killed all the firstborn in Egypt, where the Hebrews were enslaved. According to the *Exodus* story,<sup>7</sup> it was the tenth of the ten plagues that were visited upon ancient Egypt that prompted the Pharaoh of the time to allow the Hebrews to depart from Egypt. Usually, the fast only lasts a few hours. It is a common custom for the firstborn to excuse themselves by taking part in a *seudat-miṣvah*, a festive meal marking the observance of a *miṣvah* (commandment), such as completing the study of a section of the *Torah*. The meal creates an atmosphere of rejoicing that overrides the requirement to continue the fast for the entire day. Most synagogues hold such a meal at the conclusion of the morning service on the day before Passover.

Other fasts include that of the bride and groom among Ashkenazi (Germanic) Jews, who observe a fast on their wedding day up to the time of the marriage ceremony, as a personal *Yom Kippur*. There are also other traditional fasts, generally half-day fasts, which some Jews observe on Mondays and Thursdays.

Despite the popularity of the various fasts of atonement, of which the best-known is *Yom Kippur*, sincere repentance (*teshuvah*) for wrongdoing has generally been regarded as a more powerful means of invoking divine forgiveness. Occasionally, fasts of gratitude are also undertaken, in which a person suppresses his or her needs in order to focus on the spiritual dimension of life and to thank God for His help after a particularly difficult event or set of circumstances. In such instances, the individual is acknowledging human dependence upon God and His blessings.

Historically, the nazirites of biblical times, the *Merkavah* mystics of antiquity (fl. C1st BCE – C6th CE), the medieval *Ḥasidei Ashkenaz* (German *hasidim*, C12th–13th CE) and others have engaged in fasting and other austerities as penances and purification rituals. In his *Duties of the Heart*, Bahya ibn Pakuda (C11th) includes fasting as one of the practices essential for bringing about spiritual perfection. Various codes of conduct providing guidance on fasting were written by members of the medieval fellowship of kabbalists in Safed in northern Israel. Moses Cordovero (1522–1570), for example, writes:

A person should fast according to his capacity. . . . A person ought to fast for three consecutive days, four times each year, during each of the four seasons. Praiseworthy is the individual who adds to this.

*Moses Cordovero, in Hanhagot, in SSRF pp.37–38*

Abraham Berukhim (c. 1515–1593), who reflected the more extreme ascetic tendencies of the Safed fellowship, writes in his guide:

There is a fellowship of penitents whose members fast regularly and who pray the afternoon service each day in weeping and in tears. They practise flagellation and wear sackcloth and ashes. Among them there are some who fast two days and nights every week. Some do so for three days and nights.

*Abraham Berukhim, in Hanhagot, in SSRF p.51*

Elijah de Vidas (C16th), another of the Safed kabbalists, published a work *Reshit Hokhmah* ('Beginning of Wisdom'), in which he writes about the spiritual benefit of fasting:

When we sanctify ourselves by abstaining from eating and drinking, which give strength to the body, we bind ourselves to Him, and to those holy and separate beings that minister to Him by abstaining from eating and drinking. Then He responds to us, because we cleave to Him. But by eating and drinking we are set apart from Him.

*Elijah de Vidas, Reshit Hokhmah 3:4, RHVM fol.114d, IKMH p.57*

Abraham ben Mordecai Galante (d.1560) provides an interesting picture of the practices of the Safed fellowship:

On the eve of the new moon all the people fast, including men, women, and students. And there is a place where they assemble on that day and remain the entire time, reciting penitential prayers, petitionary devotions, confession of sins, and practising flagellation. And some among them place a large stone on their stomach in order to simulate the punishment of stoning. There are some individuals who 'strangle' themselves with their hands and perform other things of a like nature. There are some persons who place themselves into a sack while others drag them around the synagogue.

*Abraham Galante, in Hanhagot, in SSRF p.42*

Rabbi Isaac Luria (the Ari), who succeeded Moses Cordovero as leader of the Safed fellowship, likewise included fasting as part of his *tikkunim* – spiritual exercises designed to mitigate sin and restore the harmony that had been ruptured at the time of creation. For instance, Luria prescribed a sixty-one-day fast for a person who had committed the severe sin of transgressing a positive commandment, especially concerning the obligations of prayer, the wearing of phylacteries (*tefillin*) and a prayer shawl, and recitation of the *Shema* prayer.<sup>8</sup> There is also evidence that Luria was familiar with the extreme ascetic practices and penances of the *Hasidei Ashkenaz* and worked them into the practices he enjoined on his fellowship.<sup>9</sup> Luria believed that other than fasting

and self-affliction, few means remained in his day for self-punishment and repentance for sin, since “lashings” were no longer conducted.<sup>10</sup>

The *Ta’anit* section of the *Talmud* presents the varying and often contradictory views of the rabbis about fasting. On the one hand, it gives the laws relating to fasts, especially to those collective fasts recommended during times of drought, which were believed to result from the sins of the people. On the other hand, it discourages fasts as personal acts of contrition or remorse for personal transgressions, undertaken to solicit divine grace and forgiveness:

Samuel said: “Whoever takes on himself a fast (*ta’anit*) is a sinner.” This is in agreement with the master quoted in the following. Rabbi Eleazar ha-Kappor Beribbi said: “Why does the verse state (of the nazirite): ‘And he shall make atonement for him, for he sinned because of the soul.’”<sup>11</sup> Against what soul did this person sin? It refers to the fast that he afflicted (on) himself by abstaining from wine. If one who afflicts himself by abstaining from wine is called a sinner, how much more so is a person a sinner if he abstains from everything (by fasting). Rabbi Eleazar said: “He (a nazirite) is called holy, for it says: ‘He shall be holy, he shall let the locks of the hair of his head grow long.’”<sup>12</sup> If one (a nazirite) who abstains only from wine is called holy, how much more so shall one who abstains from everything (by fasting) be called holy?

But did Rabbi Eleazar say this (that fasting makes a person holy)? Did not Rabbi Eleazar say: “A person should always consider that there is a holy component to his physical self.” That (the statement calling him holy) refers to one who can bear self-affliction (*z’ur ‘azmo*), the other to one who cannot.

Resh Lakish said: “One who avoids fasts (*ta’anit*) is called pious, as it is written: ‘One who does good to himself is a merciful man, but one who afflicts his own flesh is cruel.’”<sup>13</sup> Said Rabbi Sheshet: “A young scholar who takes on himself a fast (*ta’anit*) lets a dog eat his meal.” Rabbi Simeon ben Lakish said: “A scholar is not allowed to take on himself a fast (*ta’anit*) because he thereby weakens himself in his heavenly labours.”

*Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Ta’anit 11a–11b, in TBZB pp.114–15*

The rabbis taught: when a city is surrounded by gentiles, or threatened with inundation by a river, or when a ship is tossed about at sea, or when an individual is being pursued by gentiles or robbers, or is overcome by an evil spirit, an individual may, in all such cases, afflict himself by fasting. Rabbi Yose said: “An individual may not afflict himself by fasting because he may thereby come to need the help of other people, and they may not act mercifully toward him.” Said

Rabbi Judah: “What is Rabbi Yose’s reason? It is based on the verse: ‘And man became a living being.’”<sup>14</sup> God says: “Keep alive the soul I have given you.”

*Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Ta’anit 22b, in TBZB p.115*

Although pietists often adopted the ascetic approach, the *Talmud*’s discouragement of fasting reflects the Jewish view that excessive self-mortification is counterproductive to a spiritual life.<sup>15</sup> In his moral guide, the sixteenth-century Rabbi Elijah de Vidas of Safed counsels that self-affliction and fasting do not help a person to come closer to God:

He need not mortify his flesh or torment himself by fasting (*ta’anit*), for *devekut* (intense attachment to God) depends on nothing but ardent desire (for Him).

*Elijah de Vidas, Reshit Hokhmah 2:4, RHVM fol.63a, in IKMH p.59*

The eighteenth-century rabbi known as the Vilna Gaon discouraged fasting as a way of controlling negative impulses and behaviour. In a well-known letter of moral guidance to his mother and family, he writes:

Man must deprive himself until he dies, not by fasting (*ta’anit*) or asceticism, but by controlling his mouth and desires. This is *teshuvah* (repentance). And this is the whole reward of the world-to-come, as it is written: “For the commandment is a lamp and the *Torah* is a light” – but “the way to (eternal) life is the rebuke that disciplines.”<sup>16</sup> And that is worth more than any amount of fasting (*ta’anit*) and self-affliction! For every second that man controls his tongue, he merits some of the ‘hidden light’.

*“The Vilna Gaon’s Letter,” in Pirhei Shoshanim, PSSY*

The same approach was adopted by the *hasidim*, who discouraged austerities such as fasting. It was believed that the human body is given by God, neither to torture nor to indulge, but to nurture so that it may be fit for the worship of the Divine. God is to be worshipped through joy, not through despair, depression, or negativity.

See also: **austerities** (8.5), **fasting**, **nazirite** (7.1), **perushim** (7.1), **teshuvah** (►4), **tikkunim** (8.5).

1. See “fasting,” “ta’anit,” *Wikipedia*, ret. March 2016.
2. *Leviticus* 23:26–32; *Numbers* 29:7; *Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Yoma* 81a.
3. “What Happened on the Ninth of Av? A Historical Overview,” *HNAC*.
4. *2 Kings* 25:22–25; *Jeremiah* 41:1–18.

5. *Esther* 4:16.
6. *Mishnah Berurah* 686:2.
7. *Exodus* 12:12–27, 13:15.
8. Lawrence Fine, *Physician of the Soul*, *PSHC* p.169.
9. Lawrence Fine, *Physician of the Soul*, *PSHC* pp.180–83.
10. Isaac Luria, in *Hanhagot*, in *SSRF* p.71.
11. *Numbers* 6:11.
12. *Numbers* 6:5.
13. *Proverbs* 11:17.
14. *Genesis* 2:7.
15. Ben Zion Bokser, *The Talmud*, *TBZB* p.110.
16. *Proverbs* 6:23.

**fidā'** (A/P) *Lit.* sacrifice, redemption, ransom; used in the *Qur'ān* for the ransom of captives;<sup>1</sup> in Sufism, offering one's entire self to the divine Beloved. Al-Ḥallāj traces the increasing degrees of self-sacrifice:

Sacrifice (*fidā'*) of the *nafs* (lower mind) means abandonment of the passions; that of the heart (*qalb*), abandonment of miraculous powers (*karāmāt*); that of the intellect (*'aql*), abandonment of acts of negligence; that of the spirit (*rūḥ*), abandonment of phenomenal things; and that of the inner consciousness (*sirr*), paying no attention to (spiritual) stations (*maqāmāt*).

*Al-Ḥallāj, in Mashrab al-Arwāḥ 4:43, in MARB p.90, in SSE11 p.36*

Ḥāfiẓ says that he sacrifices his *jān* (life, soul) before the beloved:

Welcome! O messenger of the longing ones!  
 Impart the message of the friend,  
 so that, with the greatest of pleasure,  
 I may make my soul (*jān*) a sacrifice (*fidā'*) to the friend.

*Ḥāfiẓ, Dīvān, DHA p.41, DIH p.98; cf. DHWC (30:1) p.86*

I stood like a candle,  
 ready to offer my soul (*jān*) as a sacrifice (*fidā'*) to him.  
 But he did not accept,  
 passing me by like the morning breeze.

*Ḥāfiẓ, Dīvān, DHA p.74, DIH p.144; cf. DHWC (130:3) p.269*

I make my soul (*jān*) a sacrifice (*fidā'*) to you,  
 who is both the soul and the beloved!



He who has become the dust at your door  
is relieved of distress.

*Ḥāfiẓ, Dīwān, DHM (530:1) p.474, DIH p.394; cf. DHWC (553:1) p.902*

See also: **fidā'ī** (7.1), **qurbān**.

1. *Qur'ān* 47:4.

**fidyah** (A/P) *Lit.* compensation, recompense, ransom, indemnity, atonement, penance; in Islam, the compensation due for various transactions or religious offences, such as breaking the daytime fast during *Ramaḍān* or the inability to complete a pilgrimage (*ḥajj*) or minor pilgrimage (*'umrah*) to Mecca. The practice is mentioned in the *Qur'ān*.<sup>1</sup>

Complete the *ḥajj* or *'umrah* in the service of *Allāh*, but if you are prevented, send an offering for sacrifice, such as you may find, and do not shave your heads until the offering reaches the place of sacrifice.

And if any of you is ill, or has an ailment in his scalp, (necessitating shaving), he should in compensation (*fidyah*) either fast, or feed the poor, or offer sacrifice.

*Qur'ān* 2:196; cf. AYA

See also: **jazā'**, **thawāb**.

1. See also *Qur'ān* 2:184, 57:15.

**fiqh** (A/P) *Lit.* insight, understanding, knowledge, intelligence; jurisprudence. From its original meaning, *fiqh* gradually took on the connotations of religious knowledge, canon law, dogmatic or speculative theology and jurisprudence. In early Islamic discussions, *fiqh* was contrasted with *'ilm* (knowledge). That which could be cited directly from the *Qur'ān* or from the *ḥadīth* constituted the definite and secure knowledge called *'ilm*. That which involved some measure of deduction or reasoning, based on precedent or analogy, was *fiqh*. However, *fiqh* gradually came to have the broad meaning of religious law, and within Islamic society *fiqh* governs both theology, ritual and religious observance, and also many aspects of life that would be regarded as secular in another setting. Jurisprudence is sometimes called the lesser *fiqh* (*al-fiqh al-aṣghar*), whereas theology is called the greater *fiqh* (*al-fiqh al-akbar*).

With the development of the classical schools of Islamic law came the articulation of the principles of *'uṣūl al-fiqh*, the 'roots' or sources of

jurisprudence. Four primary roots or sources were posited: the *Qur'ān*, the *Sunnah* or example of the Prophet, *ijmā'* (consensus), and *qiyās* (analogical deduction). In this context, the *Sunnah* included the *ḥadīth* – reports of the sayings and deeds of the Prophet. The *Qur'ān* and the *Sunnah* are considered to be divinely inspired, and thus have a special status not accorded to the others. These two, together with *ijmā'*, are recorded in texts and are the material sources of Muslim law. The fourth – *qiyās* – is a method of deriving, through analogical deduction, a rule that is not expressly contained in the texts, but has its ultimate basis in them.

This four-source theory,<sup>1</sup> of which the main propounder was Muḥammad ibn Idrīs al-Shāfi'ī (d.820 CE), was a response to the development of two contending schools of thought. In one, referred to as the 'ancient schools of law' (located principally in Kūfah and Madīnah), legal scholars felt free to develop legal rules to meet new situations, and their consensus prevailed as the correct legal doctrine. In response, a traditionalist movement developed, which contended that the consensus of the legal scholars was in fact only the product of human reasoning and therefore valueless. The traditionalists maintained that the *Sunnah* of the Prophet was properly represented only by formal traditions (*ḥadīth*), which reported the actual sayings or deeds of the Prophet. This resulted in a heavy traditionalist dependence on the *ḥadīth*, and led to a tendency to rely on badly authenticated traditions. A scholarly opinion would be clothed in the form of a *ḥadīth*, and a history of transmission tracing it back to the Prophet would be invented. This issue, the legal scholars' consensus versus formal traditions, became one of crucial importance, for although both movements recognized the authority of the *Qur'ān*, the *Qur'ān* itself supplied relatively little specifically legislative material.

Shāfi'ī came upon this scene as a mediator. Although he affirmed the primacy of the *Qur'ān* and the *Sunnah* of the Prophet, he realized the need for some principle of legal construction beyond that of sheer adherence to texts. He therefore formalized the method by which rules could be deduced from the sources of law (*'uṣūl al-fiqh*), and laid down the limits within which each of these sources could be used.

The study of *'uṣūl al-fiqh* is concerned with establishing a science or a system by which substantive legal principles can be derived, enabling legal scholars to determine which legal rules legitimately reflect the principles of *sharī'ah* (religious law). The rules shown by this science to be authentically Islamic are known as *furū' al-fiqh*, the branches of jurisprudence, *i.e.* practical jurisprudence. Shāfi'ī affirmed the validity of analogical deduction in extending legal principles not specifically covered in the texts of the *Qur'ān* and the *ḥadīth*, but restricted legal scholars to analogical deduction, rejecting their use of private opinion or speculative reasoning in arriving at legal principles. Regarding *ijmā'*, he ruled against the consensus of the jurists but accepted that of the community as a whole. On this point, his view did not prevail, for

most *Sunnīs* came to believe that the consensus of all jurists should be the final word on the correctness of a legal proposition.

During the third Muslim century, the ‘ancient schools’ gave way to what may be described as the classical schools, the *madhāhib* (sg. *madhhab*), each deriving its identity (and name) from a particularly authoritative teacher of law. Four of these *Sunnī* schools have survived – the *Ḥanafī* (from Abū Ḥanīfah, d.767 CE), the *Mālikī* (from Mālik ibn Anas, d.795 CE), the *Shāfi‘ī*, and the *Ḥanbalī* (from Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, d.855 CE). Despite certain differences, these four came to agree upon a theory of the four sources of law, broadly along the lines of al-Shāfi‘ī’s original ideas, except in one important respect – it accepted the consensus (*ijmā‘*) of legal scholars. However, it gave this consensus equal weight (no more) to the consensus of the entire community and subordinated both not only to the *Qur‘ān*, but also to the vast body of traditions (*ḥadīth*).

The four classical schools (*madhāhib*) had some minor differences, too, pertaining to certain subsidiary rules. Of these, two are noteworthy – *istiḥsān* (approbation, approval, preference) and *istiṣlāḥ* (consideration of the public good). The first, prominent in the *Ḥanafī* school, allows a jurist to set aside a rule deduced analogically in favour of another considered more equitable, even if its basis in the *Qur‘ān* or *ḥadīth* is less obvious. The second, originating with the *Mālikī* school but accepted by the *Shāfi‘ī* and *Ḥanbalī* schools, allows decisions on the basis of the common good (*maṣlaḥah*).

The large measure of agreement arrived at in the theoretical rules engendered a tolerance of the differences in the realm of legal doctrine. The formulation of rules of law was recognized to be an arduous effort (*ijtihād*) often leading to results that could at best be tentative. The recognition of this tentativeness prevented the espousal of any one school as the sole valid expression of the law of God.

Different theories also developed among the *Shī‘ahs* and the Kharijites. Thus the Twelve-*Imām Shī‘ahs* reject analogical deduction but posit, in its stead ‘reason’ (*‘aql*). And for them, the *Sunnah* includes the sayings of their *imāms*.

Although *fiqh* is regarded as highly important by all pious Muslims and is a part of all religious education, mystics explain that inner disciplines are of greater significance for the one who seeks Reality. In the opening lines of the preface to the *Maṣnavī*, Rūmī uses the term *fiqh Allāh* for Sufism, implying that Sufism is the true spiritual law. Speaking of the perfect Sufis, he says:

They have relinquished the form and husk of knowledge (*‘ilm*):  
 they have raised the banner of the eye of certainty (*‘ayn al-yaqīn*).  
 Thought (*fikr*) is gone, and they have gained light:  
 they have gained the throat (essence) and the sea (source) of gnosis.  
 Death, of which all others are sore afraid,  
 these people hold in derision.

None gains victory over their hearts:  
 the hurt falls on the oyster shell, not on the pearl.  
 They have let go grammar (*naḥw*) and jurisprudence (*fiqh*),  
 and have adopted mystical self-effacement (*maḥw*)  
 and spiritual poverty (*faqr*).

*Rūmī, Maṣnavī I:3493–97; cf. MJR2 p.190*

That is, the inner practice of spiritual poverty (*faqr*) is more important than the strict observance of external religious law (*fiqh*), just as self-effacement (*maḥw*) is more important than grammar (*naḥw*). Other Sufis have likewise indicated that the practice of a spiritual life is more important than adherence to externals. Abū Bakr Warrāq of Tirmidh says:

Those who are satisfied with disputation (*kalām*) about knowledge and do not practise self-discipline (*zuhd*) become *zindīqs* (heretics); and those who are satisfied with jurisprudence (*fiqh*) and do not practise abstinence (*waraʿ*) become wicked.

*Abū Bakr Warrāq, in Kashf al-Maḥjūb I, KMM p.19; cf. KM p.17*

See also: **sharīʿah**.

1. See “fiḫ,” *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, EI2; “fiqh,” *Encyclopedia of Religion*, MERM; “fiḫ,” *Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam*, SEIG.

**frashōkereti** (Av), **frashegird** (Pv) *Lit.* making (*kereti*) new (*frashō*), making wonderful; resurrection and the Day of Judgment; renewal of the universe, at which time evil will be destroyed, the creation will be restored to its original state, unity with *Ahura Mazdā* will be regained, and the dead will be resurrected (with individual salvation depending upon the nature of the sum total of a person’s thoughts and deeds); appears as a doctrine in both the Avestan and later Pahlavi texts; also known as *rist-āxēz* (Pv. the dead stand up).

See also: **resurrection (in Zoroastrianism)**.

**fú, fúlù** (C) *Lit.* to tally; a talisman, a seal (*fú*); a written charm (*lù*); a Daoist charm or talismanic writing (*fúlù*); used in shamanic practices from earliest times. Originally meaning a contract between two parties, a *fú* was a small panel of wood, metal or precious stone that was divided between the two interested parties; the reunion of the two halves proved the fidelity of the contract.

While some *fú* use standard Chinese characters, many exhibit apparent gibberish, resembling a combination of calligraphy and drawing – intentionally

so, to indicate the secret language of the spirits or deities. More complicated *fú* are made up of a combination of these characters with other elements such as astrological diagrams and/or sacred images, making them even more obscure to the uninitiated. The elements used in *fú* and the way they are made and read differ between the various Daoist sects, and are handed down secretly from generation to generation. *Fú* are used when setting up altars, offering petitions, casting spells, invoking beneficial spirits, controlling malevolent demons, dispelling ghosts, curing diseases, *etc.*

To draw effective *fú*, and make use of them in rituals, an individual needs to be properly initiated into a Daoist school or sect and should have received a collection of various *fú* handed down from generations of the lineage before him. Without both criteria being met, the ‘talisman’ is merely a piece of calligraphy or art.

*Fú* were believed to possess esoteric powers, and became increasingly popular after the publication around the eighth century of the *Huángdì Yīnfú jīng* (‘Yellow Emperor’s Hidden Talisman Classic’) – a Daoist scripture attributed to the mythical sage-ruler Huángdì (‘Yellow Emperor’). This short text describes aspects of internal alchemy and astrology. Texts of the *Língbǎo* school of Daoism and of the *Shàngqīng* school from the early fifth century refer frequently to the use of *fú*. One important *Língbǎo* scripture, the *Wǔfújīng* (‘Scripture on Five Talismans’), was based on master Gě Hóng’s alchemical works. The ability to draw and deploy *fú* was also promoted by the *Quánzhēn* school (founded C12th).

To this day, Daoists use talismanic water (*fúshuǐ*) for healing purposes and to exorcize evil spirits. A talisman bearing the names of deities is burned, and the resulting ashes are stirred into water and either ingested by or sprinkled over the sick person.

**fugin** (J) *Lit. sūtra-chanting (fugin)*; the chanting of *sūtras* and *dhāraṇīs* in a Zen monastery; takes place in the main hall (*hondō*) of the monastery, two or three times daily – morning, midday, and late afternoon or evening – accompanied by various ritual procedures, the burning of incense, and often the sounding of a bell and drum. Morning chanting, before sunrise, is known as *chōka fugin*, midday chanting as *nitchū fugin*, and the afternoon or evening chanting as *banka fugin*. Often they are referred to simply as *chōka*, *nitchū*, and *banka*. Of the three, *chōka* is regarded as the most important, and is the only one that every member of the monastic community must attend. *Dhāraṇīs* are protective and healing prayers or chants. The texts chanted are taken from the well-known *Lotus Sūtra*, the *Heart of Great Perfect Wisdom Sūtra*, and other sources. *Fugin* is also practised on Zen festival days and on other occasions.

Chanting fulfils several purposes. In addition to the concentrated devotional influence on the minds of the participants and the inculcation of a

communal, spiritual atmosphere in which to conduct the daily routine of the monastery, the intention is to commemorate past teachers, and to earn merit (S. *puṇya*, J. *kudoku*). The merit is then ritually dedicated or transferred to a variety of recipients who are named in formal dedications. In the *Sōtō Zen* school, the recipients include the historical Buddha and his disciples, the *arhats* (enlightened beings), the ancestral lineage of teachers who have transmitted the *Zen Dharma* (teachings and practice), the founders of the *Sōtō* school (Dōgen Zenji and Keizan Zenji), the founding and the deceased abbots of the various monasteries, miscellaneous *Dharma*- and monastery-protecting deities, the ancestors of present lay benefactors, together with a variety of distressed spirits such as ‘hungry ghosts’ and those who have been reborn in hellish realms.<sup>1</sup> Images and shrines to these various beings are to be found throughout the monastery buildings and, by dedication of merit, they are believed to be nourished and propitiated. The concept of merit and its transfer, a difficult concept for many Western minds, is central to many schools of *Mahāyāna* Buddhism. T. Griffith Foulk explains:

Merit, as interpreted in the East Asian Buddhist tradition, is literally the ‘virtue’ or ‘power’ (C. *dé*, J. *toku*) that results from good works or deeds (C. *gōng*, J. *ku*). It is the fruit of good *karma* (actions), conceived as a kind of spiritual energy that can be saved, invested, spent, or given away like cash. In the East Asian context, the Buddhist transfer (C. *huìxiàng*, J. *ekō*) of merit is also understood as an ‘offering of nourishment’ (C. *gòngyǎng*, J. *kuyō*) to spirits, one that is akin to generic (not uniquely Buddhist) offerings of food and drink on an altar where the mortuary tablets of ancestral spirits are enshrined.

T. Griffith Foulk, “Ritual in Japanese Zen Buddhism,” in *ZRZB* pp.62–63

The first of five formal dedications of merit, for instance, performed at the morning *fugin* in *Sōtō Zen* monasteries reads:

Having chanted the “Universal Gateway of Avalokiteshvara *Bodhisattva*” chapter of the *Lotus Sūtra*, *Great Compassionate Mind Dhāraṇī*, and *Marvellously Beneficial Disaster-Preventing Dhāraṇī*, we reverently offer the merit generated thereby to our great benefactor and founder of the doctrine, the original teacher Shākyamuni Buddha (or whatever other figure is currently enshrined as the main object of veneration in the practice place), to the eminent ancestor Dōgen, and to the great ancestor Keizan, that it may adorn their awakening, the unsurpassed fruit of buddhahood. We further offer it to all the *Dharma*-protecting *devas*, to the *Dharma*-protecting saints, to the earth spirit of this place and to the monastery-protecting spirits, to the Bodhisattva Jōhō Shichirō Daigen Shuri, and to the tutelary deities enshrined in all halls.

What we pray for is peace in the land, harmony among nations, prosperity and longevity for donors throughout the ten directions, tranquillity within the monastery, and ample sustenance for the community; may all sentient beings throughout the *Dharma* realm equally perfect omniscience.

*Dedication of Merit, SSSP p.54*

See also: **Buddhist festivals, hungry ghosts (▶1).**

1. See T. Griffith Foulk, *Soto School Scriptures, SSSP* pp.153–58.

**furqān** (A/P) *Lit.* discrimination, criterion, proof, argument; that which distinguishes between right and wrong, truth and illusion; derived from the Arabic *faraqa* (to separate, to distinguish, to differentiate, to discriminate); hence also, dawn, daybreak, since dawn separates night from day; also, aid, help or support, since a person helped or supported is distinguished by those who give the assistance; thus also, deliverance, redemption, salvation, as the ultimate support or distinguishing mark of God; related to the Aramaic *purqān* (deliverance, redemption, salvation); the title of the *Qur'ān*'s twenty-fifth *sūrah*.

In the *Qur'ān*, *al-furqān* is used with various meanings, according to the context. In general, it refers to the signs and forms of divine assistance, to everything that discriminates truth from untruth, and to every logical argument that does the same.<sup>1</sup> Thus, “O believers, if you fear God, He will give you salvation (*furqān*), and rid you of your evil thoughts and deeds, and forgive you.”<sup>2</sup> Here, *furqān* could imply either salvation or discrimination between truth and untruth. In other verses, *furqān* refers to the revelation sent by God to Muḥammad. Thus, “Blessed is He who sent down the criterion (*al-furqān*) to His servant, that it may be an admonition to all creatures”<sup>3</sup> is taken to refer to the *Qur'ān* itself. Likewise, not only the *Qur'ān*, but also the Hebrew Bible and the gospels of Jesus are regarded as the “criterion (*al-furqān*)” sent down to humanity by which truth and untruth may be understood:

It is He who sent down to you, in truth, the Book,  
confirming the scriptures that went before it;  
And He sent down the *Torah* (law of Moses)  
and the gospel (of Jesus) before this, for the guidance of humanity,  
and the criterion (*al-furqān*) between right and wrong.

*Qur'ān* 3:3; cf. AYA, KPA

The Battle of Badr (624 CE) is also called *Yawm al-Furqān* (Day of Discrimination)<sup>4</sup> because it is traditionally believed that that is the day

when *Allāh* supported the Muslims against their enemies, causing truth to be distinguished from untruth.

Mystically, the criterion or test that distinguishes truth from illusion is mystical revelation or experience. In the divine light within, the truth of everything is clearly revealed. Mystic experience is also the way to true deliverance or salvation. Thus, “sent down the criterion (*al-furqān*) to His servant” implies that the Prophet was graced with mystical experience. Such experience automatically reveals to the inner eye what is true and what is false, and this is reflected in a mystic’s words and teachings. Illustrating this in one of his stories, Rūmī describes a spiritually enlightened slave who spontaneously spoke eloquent words of great wisdom without any premeditation:

You would have said that in his inward part there was a sea,  
and that the whole sea was pearls of eloquence,  
and that the light that shone from every pearl  
became a criterion (*furqān*) to distinguish truth from falsehood.

So does the light of the criterion (*nūr-i furqān*),  
distinguish truth from falsehood, and separate them mote by mote;  
Then the light of the Divine becomes the light of our eyes:  
then both questions and their answers are found within.

*Rūmī, Maṣnavī II:850–53; cf. MJR2 p.265*

This is true of everyone, says Rūmī, who perceives the divine light within. The answers to all questions are automatically understood within one’s inner consciousness.

See also: **farq** (8.1), **firāsah** (7.3).

1. *Qur’ān* 2:48, 53, 185, 3:3, 8:29, 41; 21:48, 25:1.
2. *Qur’ān* 8:29; cf. *AYA*, *KI*, *MGK*.
3. *Qur’ān* 25:1, *AYA*.
4. *Qur’ān* 8:41.

**gaumukhi** (S/H) *Lit.* the mouth (*mukh*) of a cow (*gau*, *go*); a cloth bag in the shape of a cow’s head, wide at the bottom with a narrow opening, containing a rosary, the beads of which are counted while the hand remains inside. This keeps the rosary safe from the eyes of the world.

**Gāyatrī Mantra** (S/H) *Lit.* she-who-sings (*gāyatrī*) prayers (*mantra*); *gāyatrī* prayers; *gāyatrī* is a poetic metre consisting of twenty-four syllables, arranged



in a variety of ways but generally as a triplet of eight syllables each. Numerous hymns in the *Ṛig Veda* are composed in this metre, the most sacred being the verse known as the *Gāyatrī* or *Sāvitrī Mantra*, addressed to the Sun (*Savitrī*) as a deity and the supreme generative force; traditionally believed to have been composed by sage Vishvāmitra. *Gāyatrī* is also personified as a goddess, the wife of *Brahmā*, and the mother of the four *Vedas*, and also *brāhmaṇs*.

It is the duty of every *brāhmaṇ* to recite the *Gāyatrī Mantra* during their morning and evening devotions. It is also an important aspect of the *upanayana* (initiation by a *guru*) ceremony for young men. Each syllable of the *mantra* symbolizes a different deity who, it is believed, cleanses all sins from one who repeats it. Originally a simple invocation to the sun god to shed its blessings on the earth, it has come to be regarded as a mystic formula of universal prayer. The *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* says:

He who wants to go to heaven  
should recite a thousand *gāyatrīs*;  
An unlimited number provides  
for the fulfilment of all desires.

*Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* 2:17

All but the first line of the *mantra* is drawn from the *Ṛig Veda*. Various interpretations and translations, it reads:

*Aum*, we meditate on the glory of  
that divine Sun (*Savitrī*),  
who has created this universe –  
May He enlighten our minds!<sup>1</sup>

*Gāyatrī Mantra, Ṛig Veda* 3:62.10

Swami Shraddhananda paraphrases the meaning:

God is the light which illumines all the worlds;  
He is the light of consciousness;  
He illumines all things;  
May that Light of lights  
enter my heart and illumine my understanding.

*Swami Shraddhananda, Seeing God Everywhere, SGEP* p.72

K. Padmanabhan observes:

The *mantra* is not an appeal, praying for physical or other needs. It merely invokes, not God or providence, as is usually understood, but the driving force behind the cosmos, the divine light existing within

oneself, for obtaining inspiration, for enlightenment of Himself and to become one with Him.

*K. Padmanabhan, Gāyathrī, GKP p.v*

The *Bṛihadāranyaka* finds symbolism in the three feet (*pādas*, lines) and twenty-four syllables (eight per foot) of the *Gāyatrī Mantra*.<sup>2</sup> The first foot symbolizes the three worlds of the earth, firmament, and heaven; the second, that of the threefold knowledge (*i.e.* the wisdom of the three *Vedas*); the third of *prāṇa* (in-breath), *apāna* (out-breath), and *vyāna* (diffused breath). Together, these three comprise eight syllables. The fourth foot is the divine Sun (*Savitṛi*) itself, from which the whole of creation (the other three feet) has sprung forth.

The *Chhāndogya Upanishad* also sees the *gāyatrī* metre as symbolic of all that exists, and hence of *Brahman*:

Verily, the *gāyatrī* is all that is, whatever has come to be. Verily, speech is *gāyatrī*: speech sings (*gāi-*) and protects (*tra-*) all this that has come to be.

Verily, what *gāyatrī* is, that verily this earth is. Whatever has come to be is established on it (the earth), and does not go beyond it.

Verily, what the earth is, that verily is a person's body. The *prāṇas* (subtle life energies) are established in it (the body), and do not go beyond it.

Verily, what a person's body is, that verily is what a man's heart is. The *prāṇas* are established in it, and do not go beyond it.

Thus is the *gāyatrī* both four-footed and six-fold. This is also declared by a verse in the *Ṛig Veda*:

Such is its greatness,  
yet the *Purusha* is greater still.  
All beings are but one quarter (foot) of Him:  
the other three quarters (three feet)  
are what is immortal in heaven.<sup>3</sup>

*Chhāndogya Upanishad 3:12.1–6; cf. PU pp.387–88*

The sixfold aspect of the *gāyatrī* metre is comprised of all creatures, of speech, earth, body, heart, and the *prāṇas*. Even so, these make up only one quarter of the divine Being (*Purusha*), since most of Him is immortal. Later, the *Chhāndogya Upanishad* says:

Verily, a person is a sacrifice. His first twenty-four years constitute the morning libation. The *gāyatrī* (hymn) has twenty-four syllables, and the morning libation is offered with *gāyatrī* hymns.

*Chhāndogya Upanishad 3:16.1*

This kind of symbolism or encoded meaning has made the *Gāyatrī Mantra* a favourite for meditation purposes. Nevertheless, Dariyā Sāhib, like so many other mystics, cautions that mere repetition of the prayer, without inner concentration, is of little value:

Everyone tries to search for the Truth  
by studying scriptures like the *Gītā*,  
the *Vedas* and the *Purāṇas*.  
But so long as the true Sound is not obtained,  
all study and research go in vain.

With paper and pen in hand, what can one gain by writing,  
if one is not absorbed in love?  
What is the use of bathing by plunging into water,  
if the inner blemishes are not washed off?  
What benefit can be derived from the evening ritual,  
the libation of water and by repeating the *Gāyatrī Mantra*,  
if one's mind is not absorbed  
in automatic repetition of the holy names?  
If one has not entered within by removing the veil of deceit,  
how can the cycle of birth and death be removed?

*Dariyā Sāhib, Shabd 5:19; cf. DG1 pp.96–97*

1. See also *Yajur Veda* 36:3, *Sāma Veda* 6:3.10.
2. *Bṛihadāranyaka Upanishad* 5:14.1–8.
3. *Ṛig Veda* 10:90.3.

**gematria** (He) *Lit.* a system of divination developed by the *Ḥasidei Ashkenaz* (C13th German pietists), and subsequently used by kabbalists and others; a form of alphabetic numerology used to find relationships between apparently unrelated things. The method was used in the Graeco-Roman world where it was known as *isopsēphē* (Gk. ‘equal pebbles’). Pebbles arranged in patterns were used by the Greeks for teaching arithmetic and geometry. Moreover, the Greeks and Romans wrote their numbers as letters, which automatically gave a numerical value to some letters. In early Christian literature, the best-known example is the “number of the beast” mentioned in *Revelations* as 666,<sup>1</sup> a number that has provided a foundation for endless speculation. The numerology of modern times is a distant relative of these earlier practices.

*Gematria* is the system as it is practised in Judaism. Every letter in the Hebrew alphabet has a numerical value, assigned sequentially. The first nine letters are numbered from 1 to 9 in steps of 1; the next nine from 10 to 90 in steps of 10; and the remaining nine from 100 to 900 in steps of 100. This comprises a total of 22 numbers for the basic Hebrew letters, plus 5 additional

numbers for letter forms used when these letters fall at the end of a word. Summing the numerical values of letters gives a numerical value to words, phrases and sentences, which can then be compared and further manipulated with the intention of discovering equivalences and correspondences. Thus, *yod* is 10, *yod aleph* is 11 (10+1) and *yod bet* is 12 (10+2); *kaf* is 20 and *kaf bet* is 22; *lamad* is 30, and so on. Manipulating the letters results in new words with new meanings.

As a very simple example, the numerical value of the letters comprising the name of God *Elohim* is 86. Similarly, the numerical value of *ha-teva* (nature) is also 86. The correspondence is that *Elohim* is regarded as the aspect of God that is reflected in nature. But *gematria* is not confined to religious topics. The numerical value of the Hebrew word *hai* (life) is 18, which is commonly regarded as a lucky number, while a *gematria* on the walls of Pompeii reads (in Greek), “I love her whose number is 545” – probably someone’s initials (*phi-mu-epsilon*, 500+40+5), by which means the unknown scrawler of graffiti concealed his beloved’s name.

In a spiritual context, the practice reflects the belief that everything exists according to the divine plan and is predestined; that there is a harmonious divine order and law; and that correspondences discovered by means of *gematria* reveal aspects of the divine plan.

Other related techniques include *temurah*, which involves shuffling the letters of a word according to certain systematic rules, and *notarikon*, interpreting the letters of a word as abbreviations of other words.<sup>2</sup> These techniques are still used by people wishing to find codes or esoteric meanings in biblical words and letters.

See also: **hitbodedut** (8.5), **kavanot** (8.5), **zeruf** (8.5).

1. *Book of Revelation* 13:18.

2. See Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, MTGS p.100.

**gerushin** (He) (sg. *gerush*) *Lit.* banishments, divorces, wanderings in exile; the wanderings of ascetics; esoterically, the exile of the *Shekhinah* (indwelling divine presence) in this world; also, a type of meditation originating among the sixteenth-century Jewish mystics of Safed in northern Israel, in which a biblical verse was repeated over and over until the practitioner merged into it, the intention being that the verse should reveal its meaning to the practitioner; also, the name of a section of the *Talmud*, concerning divorce.

According to kabbalistic belief, the *Shekhinah* remains in exile in the world for as long as the Jewish people remain alienated from their spiritual purpose. The mystics of Safed undertook ascetic retreats or *gerushin* (wanderings) in the countryside near the city, in order to devote their minds to the mysteries

of God and His creation. Their intention was to transform themselves into receptive vessels for the *Shekhinah*.

In his book *Tomer Devorah* ('Palm Tree of Deborah'), Rabbi Moses Cordovero provides some instruction on the practice:

One should wander as if exiled, from place to place, purely for the sake of heaven, and thereby make oneself a vessel for the *Shekhinah* in exile. . . . Thus one should humble one's heart and bind it to the *Torah*, even as Rabbi Simeon bar Yoḥai and his associates used to wander about and discuss *Torah*. And if one trudges on foot from place to place, without horse or cart, so much the better.

*Moses Cordovero, Tomer Devorah 9, TDMC, in JKLM p.52*

Interpretations of biblical texts would pour out of Cordovero at such times. He speaks of

what I and others have experienced in connection with *gerushin*, when we wandered in the fields with the kabbalist Rabbi Solomon Alkabez, discussing verses from the Bible suddenly, without previous reflection. On these occasions, new ideas would come to us in a manner that cannot be believed unless one has seen or experienced it many times.

*Moses Cordovero, Or Ne'erav 5:2, ONMC fol.32b–33a, in JKLM p.54*

*Gerushin* was also one of many methods used to inculcate communion with the *Shekhinah*.

See also: **Shekhinah** (8.1).

**ghaṇṭā** (S), **dril bu** (T), **jiāndì, jiānzhi** (C), **kenchi** (J) *Lit.* a bell, gong; one of the many objects used in Hindu ritual; one of the inner sounds described in yogic literature; also, in Indian mythology, a name of *Shiva*;<sup>1</sup> in tantric Buddhist ritual and symbolism, a hand bell, often with a handle in the form of a single or double sceptre or thunderbolt (*vajra*), usually five-pronged, but sometimes with one, three or nine prongs, the latter particularly associated with the Tibetan *Nyingma* tradition;<sup>2</sup> also, used in Buddhist monasteries to announce the assembly times for the recitation of *sūtras* and other observances, and generally as a timekeeper to keep monastic activities on schedule.

In Hinduism, the *ghaṇṭā* is an attribute of *Shiva*, the sound of whose bell or drum symbolizes creation and represents his form as the creative mystic Sound. Traditions surrounding the bell contain hints as to the significance of the mystic Sound in the creative process.<sup>3</sup> One of the twelve weapons of the goddess *Durgā* is also a bell, invoked by prayer.

The *ghaṇṭā* and the *vajra* are the two most important ritual items in tantric (also called esoteric or *Vajrayāna*) Buddhism, and a proliferation of symbolic meanings are attributed to them. The *ghaṇṭā*'s rapidly fading sound, for instance, symbolizes the transience of material things. More significantly, the bell is also said to represent the *pāramitā* (perfection) of wisdom (*prajñā*), which is perceived as an aspect of the feminine principle; while the adamantine, indestructible nature of the *vajra* (T. *rdo rje*) represents compassion, or a method (*upāya*) of teaching or practice, and reflects the masculine principle. In the tantric tradition, enlightenment is believed to arise from the union of these two principles and the transcendence of duality. The *vajra* also symbolizes the indestructible, changeless nature of *shūnyatā* as the ultimate Reality; it also represents the utterly unshakeable nature of an enlightened one.

*Vajradhara* ('Bearer of the Thunderbolt'), the primordial *buddha* (*Ādi-Buddha*) who represents complete realization or enlightenment, is usually depicted in the lotus posture, hands crossed over his breast, holding a *ghaṇṭā* and *vajra* in his left and right hands, respectively. According to Buddhist mythological cosmogony, from *Vajradhara* were manifested the five celestial wisdom or *dhyāni buddhas*, who are the focus of much ritual, worship, and meditation.

In the Japanese *Shingon* tantric tradition, the *ghaṇṭā* is a symbol of the sanctuary-of-compassion realm (*karuṇā-garbha-dhātu*), heaven of the five guardian kings, while the *vajra* symbolizes the diamond realm (*vajra-dhātu*). Both realms are depicted in the two principle *Shingon maṇḍalas*, which feature prominently in *Shingon* rituals.

See also: **ghaṇṭā** (3.2).

1. E.g. *Haṃsa Upanishad* 16, *Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā* 4:85, 99, *HYPM* pp.581, 585.
2. See "ghaṇṭā," *Oxford Dictionary of Buddhism, ODB*.
3. See **ghaṇṭā** (3.2).

**ghost dance** (Lakota, *wanagi wachipi*; Caddo, *nanissaanah*) A Native North American ritual dance, originating in the late nineteenth century, and incorporated into many Native North American cultural practices and belief systems; a five-day form of traditional Native American circle dancing, which is an ancient dance form common to many peoples of the world. When practised with religious or spiritual intent, some of the participants, dancing in a circle or semicircle, may enter a state of ecstasy and even leave their bodies in spirit travel.

The ghost dance<sup>1</sup> began around 1869 as part of a religious revitalization movement originating with Wodziwob ('Grey Hair'), a prophet of the Paviotso

(Northern Paiute) people of Oregon. Wodziwob (*d.c.* 1872) saw in a vision that a new ruler was going to come to the earth, bringing with him the spirits of the dead. The world would become paradise, bringing eternal life, and ending racial discrimination:

Preparation for this event entailed dancing with only short rests, bathing daily, and decorating oneself with red, black, and white paint. It was thought that dancing would hasten the approach of the dead. Ghost dancers were encouraged to faint and dream (*i.e.* leave the body and spirit travel) of the returning dead. In these ghost dance dreams, many people met and talked with dead relatives who were on their way back to join the living. Others saw that everyone in the land of the dead was happy.

*"Ghost Dance of 1870," Dictionary of Native American Mythology, DNAM*

Wodziwob's teaching spread to other tribal nations, albeit with variations. Among the Earth Lodge Cult of central and northern California, the teaching morphed into an end-of-the-world belief, with dances held in underground bunkers to protect the dancers from the imminently expected holocaust. Among the Pomo tribe of California, it changed into the Christian-influenced Dreamer or Bole-Marú Cult, which taught the revelation of dreams and a strict moral code. The notion of an imminent end of the world was abandoned in place of belief in an afterlife and a supreme Deity. Back in Oregon where the ghost dance had begun, under the influence of the Tillamook teacher Yetcit, the dance became the Southwest Wind Dance. Tillamook taught the compelling line that non-participants would die. Only those who danced would live, and they would be joined by their dead relatives. Moreover, whatever they wished for during the dance would be delivered the following morning.

The ghost dance that is more commonly remembered in present times is another variation of Wodziwob's teachings, based on the doctrine of the Northern Paiute spiritual leader and visionary Wovoka ('Wood Cutter', c. 1856–1932), also known as Jack Wilson. Wovoka's teaching was founded on universal love, moral and honest living, and co-operation rather than war among Native American tribes; he also prophesied the reincarnation of Jesus in 1892 and an end to European expansion. According to Wovoka, he had been the recipient of a heavenly vision in which he had been instructed in the ghost dance and told to take it back to his people. He taught that correct practice of the ghost dance would raise the spirits of the dead, who would join with the living to fight against the Europeans; and if every Indian in the West danced the new dance, evil would be washed away, and a renewed earth would be filled with faith, love, and an abundance of things to eat.

The original name for the cult was 'dance in a circle', which the Lakota adopted as *wanagi wachipi* (spirit dance). Since the cult came to the attention

of the Europeans through the Lakota, it became known by its Lakota name, which was subsequently translated as 'ghost dance'.

First practised among the Paiute of Nevada in 1889, this variant of the ghost dance spread rapidly through the western states of America, with individual tribes again combining selected aspects with their own beliefs and practices. Many sent delegations to Wovoka to determine whether he and his teachings were to be trusted. Some, such as the Navajos of the southwest, entirely rejected it. Among those who embraced the cult were the Lakota, whose traditional beliefs already included a renewed earth in which all evil had been washed away. The Lakota therefore accepted that this new world order was soon to come and, in their interpretation, this included the departure of the Europeans from their land. Moreover, not all were convinced that Wovoka preached pacifism, and the ghost dance and acceptance of its associated doctrines is thought to have contributed to the Lakota resistance to assimilation according to legislation passed by the white Americans. In December 1890, this resistance led to the killing of between 150 and 300 Native Americans, including women and children, at the Wounded Knee Massacre. The massacre was widely condemned at the time by a sympathetic American public who judged it to have been a huge overreaction. In present times, although the apocalyptic elements of the teaching have been abandoned, the ghost dance is still performed by the Caddo nation of Oklahoma.

The Lakota Sioux holy man John Lame Deer (1903–1976) speaks of the origins of the ghost dance from the Native American perspective:

The ghost dance started in the southwest among the Utes. When the sun was darkened, one of their holy men heard a loud noise, like many thunders. He fell down dead, but an eagle carried him up to the sky. When he came back to life again, he told the people that he had seen God, or the Great Spirit. He had been shown a new and beautiful land which the Great Spirit had prepared for his Indian children. It was covered with lush, high grass. It was as the land had been before the white man came, full of buffalo, deer and antelope. It was dotted with many *tipis*. In it lived all Indians who had been killed by the white man or by his diseases. They were all alive again in that beautiful land. No white man's things were allowed among them, no guns, no pots and pans, no whisky.

That Ute holy man came back to earth with a sacred knowledge. He had been taught things in that new land – a few songs and a dance. By singing and dancing, the dead Indians could be made to return to the earth together with the buffalo. That Ute medicine man began to teach the dance to his people. He had five songs. The first brought on mist



and cold, the second brought snow, the third brought a gentle shower, the fourth brought on a big rainstorm, the fifth made the sun shine again. That man also had received a holy feather and some sacred, red face paint. He told everybody, "Don't hurt a human being, don't fight. My ghost dance is a dance of peace."

*John Lane Deer, Seeker of Visions, LDSV pp.238–39*

Also speaking of the ghost dance, the Sioux Indian Dick Fool Bull (b.c. 1888) relates what his uncle used to tell him:

When I was a young boy, I liked to stick around my old uncle because he always had stories to tell. Once he said, "There's something new coming, travelling on the wind. A new dance. A new prayer." He was talking about *wanagi wachipi*, the ghost dance. "Short Bull and Kicking Bear travelled far," my uncle told me. "They went to see a holy man of another tribe far in the south, the Paiute tribe. They had heard that this holy man could bring dead people to life again, and that he could bring the buffalo back."

My uncle said it was very important, and I must listen closely. Old Unc said: "This holy man let Short Bull and Kicking Bear look into his hat. There they saw their dead relatives walking about. The holy man told them, 'I'll give you something to eat that will kill you, but don't be afraid. I'll bring you back to life again.' They believed him. They ate something and died, then found themselves walking in a new, beautiful land. They spoke with their parents and grandparents, and with friends that the white soldiers had killed. Their friends were well, and this new world was like the old one, the one the white man had destroyed. It was full of game, full of antelope and buffalo. The grass was green and high, and though long-dead people from other tribes also lived in this new land, there was peace. All the Indian nations formed one tribe and could understand each other. Kicking Bear and Short Bull walked around and saw everything, and they were happy. Then the holy man of the Paiutes brought them back to life again."

*Dick Fool Bull, in MNNA pp.137–38*

It seems that some experiences during the ghost dance were at least partly induced by the psychoactive cactus, peyote, known to the Native Americans as the 'sacred medicine'. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the US authorities tried to ban Native American religious ceremonies that involved the use of peyote. Archaeological finds indicate that the peyote cactus has been used in what is now Mexico and the southwestern USA for at least five to six thousand years.

See also: **peyote** (►4).

1. For historical details, see “ghost dance of 1870,” “ghost dance of 1890,” *Dictionary of Native American Mythology, DNAM*; “ghost dance,” *Wikipedia*, ret. November 2017.

**ghusl** (A/P) *Lit.* bath, washing; in Islamic ritual, the major ablution, as opposed the lesser ablution (*wuḍūʿ*); the total or complete ablution; performed at least once a week on Fridays by every Muslim who has reached puberty, and after anything that causes major ritual impurity (*junub*), mostly sexual intercourse and erotic dreams. *Ghusl* is also performed before going to the mosque on the day of *jumʿah* (Friday). Other acts that cause lesser impurity are cleansed by the lesser ablution, which is performed before each of the five daily prayers. Details of how and when to perform *ghusl* are given in the *ḥadīth*,<sup>1</sup> for instance:

The Prophet said, “*Ghusl* on Friday is compulsory for every Muslim reaching the age of puberty.”

*Ḥadīth Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* 1:12.817, HSB

And:

When ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Umar used to do *ghusl* for major ritual impurity, he would begin by pouring water on his right hand and washing it. Then, in order, he would wash his genitals, rinse his mouth, snuff water in and out of his nose, wash his face and splash his eyes with water. Then he would wash his right arm and then his left, and after that he would wash his head. He would finish by having a complete wash and pouring water all over himself.

*Ḥadīth Mālik Muwaṭṭaʿ* 2:18.71, HM

In Sufism, *ghusl* represents the complete cleansing of the inner being from all that is other than God by means of the Water of Life, the divine creative power:

The total ablution (*ghusl*) symbolizes the purification (*ṭahārat*) of the whole heart from bodily impurities and the darkness of the turbidity of the *nafs* (lower mind) by means of the water from the Spring of Life (*Āb-i Chashmah-i Ḥayvān*), of gnosis and contemplative vision, and plunging into the sea of lovingkindness and the depths of the Ocean of Being. By these actions, the impurities resulting from the heart’s coupling with nature may be purged and the outward impurity of the spirit that results from the defilement of lust may be cleansed, so that

one may become worthy of circumambulating the *Ka'bah* of God's face and deserving of devotional retreat in the Father Mosque (*Maṣjid-i Aqṣā*) of the heart and soul, which are connected with God.

*Mir'āt-i 'Ushshāq, in TAT p.218; cf. in SSE3 p.74*

Ḥāfiẓ says that it is love of God that cleanses the heart, not outward “washing”:

O *ṣūfī*, with the water of the wine (of love)  
 wash the rust from your own heart.  
 God's forgiveness does not come  
 by washing (*shust*) and cleansing (*shū*)  
 the (outward) *khirqah* (patched cloak) (of hypocrisy).  
*Ḥāfiẓ, Dīvān, DHA p.101 (236:9), DIH p.192; cf. DHWC (266:10) p.472*

According to 'Aṭṭār, the true *ghusl* is to plunge forever into the divine Immensity:

What is your total ablution (*ghusl*)?  
 To plunge into the depths of divine Unity,  
 and never return.  
*'Aṭṭār, Dīvān, Qaṣā'id 16:876, DASN p.54; cf. in SSE3 p.74*

See also: **wuḍū'**.

1. E.g. *Ḥadīth Mālik Muwaṭṭa'* 2:18.69–2:23.90, *HM*; *Ḥadīth Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* 1:5.248–92, *HSB*; *Ḥadīth Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* 6:2451–56, *HSM*.

**glorification** Religiously, praise and external worship of God, especially through the singing of psalms and hymns; spiritually, the internal feeling and attitude of glorifying, worshipping, and exalting the Divine; adoration, worship, extreme mystical reverence and veneration; also, the inundation of the soul with spiritual light on its ascent into heavenly realms, either at death or while still living in the body; also, in Christianity, the glorification of Jesus on the “holy Mount”, when his body is said to have become transfigured with light.<sup>1</sup>

There are many texts throughout the world's religions which understand glorification as praise of the Most High, such as the biblical *Wisdom of Jesus ben Sirach*:

We could say much more and still fall short:  
 to put it concisely, “He is all.”  
 Where shall we find sufficient power to glorify Him,  
 since He is the Great One, above all His works,

the awe-inspiring Lord, stupendously great,  
 and wonderful in His power?  
 Exalt the Lord in your praises  
 as high as you may – still He surpasses you.  
 Exert all your strength when you exalt Him,  
 do not grow tired – you will never come to the end.  
 Who has ever seen Him to give a description?  
 Who can glorify Him as He deserves?  
 Many mysteries remain even greater than these,  
 for we have seen only a few of His works,  
 the Lord himself having made all things –  
 and having given wisdom to devout men.

*Wisdom of Jesus ben Sirach 43:27–33, JB*

Christians have generally taken the transfiguration story literally. In fact, the *Macarian Homilies* speak not only of the glorification of the body of Jesus, but also of his followers (the “saints”) on the Day of Resurrection (“that Day”):

As the body of the Lord was glorified, when he went up into the mountain, and was transfigured into the divine glory and into the infinite light, so are the bodies of the saints glorified and shine like lightning. The glory that was within Christ was outspread upon His body and shone; and in like manner in the saints, the power of Christ within them shall in that Day be poured outwardly upon their bodies.

*Macarian Homilies 15:38, SHME p.125*

The idea of glorification of the body on the Last Day was a tenet of the teachings of Paul. He writes that on that Day, “we shall all be changed”:

Behold, I show you a mystery: we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.

*1 Corinthians 15:51–53, KJV*

Glorification is used in other contexts. The author of John’s gospel has Jesus say in a number of places that God will glorify the Son, so that the Son may glorify Him.<sup>2</sup> Here, as elsewhere in John’s gospel, the Son is the creative power of God, the divine Word or *Logos*, incarnated in Jesus:

Father, the hour is come; glorify Your Son,  
 that Your Son also may glorify You.

*John 17:1; cf. KJV*

Jesus also says he is himself glorified in his disciples, through their behaviour and their spiritual advancement:

Herein is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit:  
so shall you be my disciples.

*John 15:8; cf. KJV*

Gnostic texts have generally understood glorification in a mystical manner – as being immersed in the infinite Light, as in the *Trimorphic Protennoia*:

I am inviting you into the exalted, perfect Light.  
Moreover, as for this (Light), when you enter it,  
you will be glorified by those who give glory,  
and those who enthrone will enthrone you.  
You will accept robes from those who give robes,  
and the Baptists will baptize you,  
and you will become gloriously glorious,  
the way you first were when you were light.

*Trimorphic Protennoia 45, NHS28 pp.422–23*

See also: **adoration** (►4), **transfiguration** (7.2), **worship**.

1. *Mark* 9:2–10.
2. See also *John* 17:1–10.

**gocharī** (S) *Lit.* wandering (*chara*) like a cow (*go*); a term used to describe a *Shvetāmbara* Jain mendicant's food- or alms-gathering round, which indicates their method of begging, in which they go from house to house, starting at whatever house is closest to them without making any preconceived plan of action, and taking only a small amount of food from each home, just as a cow moves constantly while grazing, taking a little with each mouthful. Such a mendicant is known as a *gocharin*. The corresponding *Digambara* term is *āhāra-dāna* (food donation).

Jain mendicants neither cook their own food, nor do they have it specially prepared for them. In accordance with their vow of *ahiṃsā* (non-harming), the intention is to cause the minimum harm to other creatures. Cooking, especially by means of fire, causes considerable harm to minute living organisms. By taking only a little food from each household, a mendicant ensures that food is not cooked especially for him. He also enters the house where he is given food, which enables him to be doubly sure. Taking only a little food also ensures that minimal hardship is placed upon the family, as well as enabling him to check that he will not be breaking any of his vows by accepting it.

*Shvetāmbara* mendicants generally make two food-gathering rounds in a day – around 11 a.m. and in the late afternoon, and all food collected must all be consumed before sunset. One individual can collect food for other mendicants, who eat communally at their place of residence, after expiations have been performed for any sins that might have been committed in the process.

See also: **āhāra-dāna**.

**gohonzon** (J) *Lit.* *go* (honorific prefix) + object of veneration (*honzon*); principal object of devotion, adoration or worship among the many Nichiren schools and sub-schools of Japanese Buddhism; originally a tablet of wood on which the Buddhist reformer and monk Nichiren Daishōnin (1222–1282) inscribed the *daimoku* on a block of camphor wood in 1279, which became the model for all future *gohonzon*.

The *daimoku* is the formula of worship ‘*Namu Myōhō Rengekyō* (praise to the *Sūtra of the Lotus Blossom of the Wondrous Dharma*),’ chanted daily by followers of the various Nichiren schools. In Japanese Buddhism, a *honzon* is any object of veneration, and can be a statue, image, scroll, or any other sacred object. Among the Nichiren schools, a *honzon* or *gohonzon* is usually an inscription of the *daimoku*, also known as a *moji-mandala* (script *maṇḍala*).

In later times, inscriptions of the *daimoku* are found in both homes and temples on scrolls of cloth or paper and on wooden tablets. In modern times, followers of the Soga Gakkai movement, a lay Nichiren school, each receive a *gohonzon*, which they enshrine in their homes, frequently in a *butsudan* (a shrine to a *buddha* or *bodhisattva*, often in the form of a closable cabinet), and which is used as a focus when chanting the *daimoku*.

The *daimoku* is written vertically down the centre of the tablet or scroll and is surrounded by the names of *buddhas*, *bodhisattvas*, and other Buddhist celestial deities and protectors. Nichiren’s signature is placed directly beneath the *daimoku*.

The original wooden block inscribed by Nichiren is called the *daigohonzon* (great object of reverence), sometimes described as a *maṇḍala* and said by the *Nichiren Shōshū* to be enshrined in the sanctuary at Kaisekiji, the school’s main temple. Other Nichiren schools dispute the authenticity of the *daigohonzon* on the grounds that Nichiren does not mention it in any of his letters or writings, nor is it mentioned in any historical records until the fifteenth century. The *Fujisan Honmon Shōshū*, another branch of the Nichiren school, also claim to have the original *daigohonzon* in their possession, which they call the *daihonzon*, and which is housed in the temple of Hota Myōhonji. But again, it is not mentioned by Nichiren in his writings.

The *Soka Gakkai* school maintain that all *gohonzon* are equally empowered by the *Dharma*, and reflect the same *buddha*-nature that is present in all

sentient beings. Moreover, they say that the power does not lie in the external *gohonzon*, but within oneself. Nichiren himself says in his *The Real Aspect of the Gohonzon*, “Never seek this *gohonzon* outside yourself.”<sup>1</sup>

See also: **bhāṇaka** (7.1), **daimoku** (8.5), **upāya-kaushalya** (7.5).

1. Nichiren Daishōnin, *Real Aspect of the Gohonzon*, WND1 p.832.

**goma** (J) See **homa**.

**gōngguò gé** (C) *Lit.* merits and demerits (*gōngguò*) on squared paper (*gé*); ledgers of merit and demerit. Nurtured by Buddhist influence, an increasing concern over retribution for deeds and misdeeds arose around the beginning of the twelfth century. Many people began to keep ledgers of their merits and demerits in order to maintain an account of their standing in the cosmic scheme of things.

**guàn** (C) *Lit.* watchtower; Daoist monastery. The use of *guàn* for a monastery derives from the legend of Yīn Xǐ, the Guardian of the Mountain Pass, who built himself a hut where he could practise ‘seeing’ (written using the related character *guān*, ‘to look’, ‘to watch’, ‘to observe’, ‘to contemplate’). According to legend, Yīn Xǐ received tuition from Lǎozǐ (c.6th BCE), and his hut became the precursor of Daoist sanctuaries and monasteries.

From the very beginnings of organized Daoism, monasteries had their own hierarchical structure under a *zhùchí* (abbot), the monastery head. Although there was no central authority covering all monasteries, several monasteries might be governed by the leader of the school to which they belonged. In the early centuries CE, *guàn* were home to either celibate monks or lay priests and their families.

By the sixth century, a fully fledged monastic movement had arisen, known as the *Tiānshī* (‘Celestial Masters’) school of Daoism. It served to train priests and religious practitioners and became the model for medieval monastic schools. *Guàn* became strict monasteries or nunneries, and married Daoist teachers (*dàoshī*) and their families were required to live outside the monastery walls. Most Daoist monasteries and congregations were founded in places said to be imbued with an enhanced presence of the *Dào*.

The late twelfth century saw the establishment of the *Quánzhēn* (‘Wholeness and Truth’) school of Daoism – a monastic movement that integrated the ‘three teachings’ (Daoism, Confucianism, and Buddhism) with the spiritual practices of inner alchemy (*nèidān*). Its founding master Wáng Zhé (C12th)

regarded monastic life as an essential “framework” for those relinquishing family life:

If you leave family life, you must first join a cloister. A cloister is a kind of residence. It provides your material life (*shēn*, body) with a framework. When your material life has a good framework, then your mind can gradually find peace. Then energy and spirit radiate in harmony, and you can enter the true *Dào*.

*Wáng Zhé, Chóngyáng lǐjiào shíwǔ lùn 1, JY190 1a, DZ1233, TEAK p.86*

The *Máoshān Shàngqīng* (‘Highest Clarity of Máoshān’) school developed by the sixth-century Daoist master Táo Hóngjǐng, which became a model for Daoist retreats and monasteries, has survived to the present day. Both the *Quánzhēn* and *Zhèngyī* (‘Orthodox Unity’, formerly known as *Tiānshī*) monastic schools also remain active in present times.

See also: **dàochǎng**.

**guaú eté** (G) *Lit.* sacred (*eté*) songs (*guaú*); chants or prayers received by shamans in mystical dream experiences; divided into *guaú eté* (true sacred songs) and *guaú aí* (little sacred songs), both being distinguished from *koty hú* (profane or festive songs). Words in the *guaú eté* are unintelligible. Neither the South American Guaraní people nor the scholars who study them agree on the meaning of the archaic Guaraní words in these sacred songs. The Paraguayan ethnologist León Cádogan (1899–1973) believed that the words of the *guaú eté* are the remains of an archaic sacred language whose meaning is no longer understood.<sup>1</sup>

According to the twentieth-century anthropologist Miguel Bartolomé, the shamans told him that the words are not as important as the tone of the chant when it is received:

The rhythm heard in sleep is closely bound up with mystical experience and with it is associated the receipt of the chant and shamanistic power. . . . Thus the shamanistic chant is a resurrection and revival of the sanctity which is present when he sees and has contact with the divine messengers who present themselves to him. . . . The shamanistic chant or prayer is like a bridge which permits communication between the world above and the world below.

*Miguel Bartolomé, “Shamanism Among the Avá-Chiripá,” SAC p.131*

Those who are to become shamans receive their personal *guaú eté* in mystical experience during sleep. A divine messenger of Ñanderú Guazú, the creator,



appears and gives the individual his special chant. Upon awaking, the person must recite this chant before an audience, usually his kinsfolk. Receiving and publicly reciting his chant marks a shaman's entry into his vocation.

Miguel Bartolomé, who lived for some months among the Avá-Chiripá tribe of Guaraní Indians, recorded many *guaú*, or chants, of different shamans and individuals. Bartolomé quotes from an Avá-Chiripá chief concerning the receipt of his chant:

*Ñanderú Guazú* sent me a messenger to teach me to pray. For this is our life, because prayer is the only thing of value on this earth. It is for this reason that the messenger came to me so that I could remain, so to speak, *Ñanderú's* envoy on this earth, so that I could look after the people and instruct them in their dealings with earthly matters. In order that I may know the designs of *Ñanderú Guazú*, I must not eat meat or fat, and I must carry out His orders so that I may care for my people. He made me listen to His prayer so that I could chant it. In my dream He made me listen to it, and so I prepared and made ready my ears.

Miguel Bartolomé, "Shamanism Among the Avá-Chiripá," SAC p.128

Bartolomé describes four groups of people in relation to the *guaú*:

1. Those who have no personal *guaú*, and who thus sing only collective chants.
2. Those who have a personal *guaú*, which is only used in ceremonies or times of crisis.
3. Those who also received some power, such as to heal, along with their *guaú*.
4. The great shamans (*paí-guazú*), of whom there are very few, who have the power to initiate and who serve as prophets and spiritual leaders.

The shaman's chant is central to his private spiritual practice and to his role as a healer within his community. Bartolomé himself was initiated by Avá Nembiará, who said that after death he would appear in a dream to Bartolomé and give him his personal chant. This *guaú eté* was then to be used by Bartolomé to invoke Avá Nembiará's divine soul. Avá Nembiará told Bartolomé that he would appear in Bartolomé's dreams to offer advice and help with problems. The *guaú eté* or chant or prayer would be effective only if they were preceded by a "deep meditation in which I should evoke his image".<sup>2</sup>

Avá Nembiará instructed Bartolomé that he would receive knowledge in dream messages until he had enough lightness and purity to travel in dreams. Eventually, Bartolomé would be able to act as a healer. At this stage, he would intone his personal chant before sleep. In his subsequent dreams, treatments for sickness would be shown to him.

Bartolomé, who listened to many of these sacred songs, observed that “in a great number of cases these personal *guaú* consist of the repetition of a single word, *engay*, which León Cádogan has translated as ‘yearning’.<sup>3</sup> The word is repeated over and over with changes in rhythm and melody.”<sup>4</sup>

Individual chants are performed to the particular deity who manifested or sent his messengers to give the chant in the dream. Avá-Chiripá shamans dedicate their chants to their major deities: *Ñanderú Guazú*, *Kuarahy*, *Yacy*, or *Tupá*. During the Avá-Chiripá’s most important ceremony, the prayer of the forest (*ñemboé kaagi*), *guaú eté* are intoned for the first eight days. On the ninth day, when the secular part of the ceremony begins, *koty hú* (festive songs) are sung.

Despite the ceremonial and utilitarian uses of the *guaú eté*, their potency comes from the mystical link between the shaman and the divine messenger.

1. León Cádogan, *Como interpretan los Chiripá la danza ritual*, ICSC p.13, in SAC p.130.
2. Miguel Bartolomé, “Shamanism Among the Avá-Chiripá,” SAC p.127.
3. León Cádogan, *Como interpretan los Chiripá la danza ritual*, ICSC p.21, in SAC p.130.
4. Miguel Bartolomé, “Shamanism Among the Avá-Chiripá,” SAC p.130.

**gulāl** (H) *Lit.* powder, usually red, thrown and sprinkled on one another, and applied to each other’s faces in a spirit of festive happiness, during the celebrations of the Holī festival. See **Holī**.

**gupti** (S/H), **gutti** (Pk) *Lit.* protection, guarding, curbing; restraint, control, regulation; in Jainism, control of body, mind and speech practised by monks and nuns with the intention of preventing (*saṃvara*) the influx of karmic matter into the soul, according to the Jain conception of *karma*, and as an aid to inculcating purity in all spheres of life, to preventing restless and unnecessary activity of body, mind and speech, and to entering states of deep meditation.

Since monks and nuns have renounced all worldliness, practice of the *guptis* is intended to bring about purification and full control of the faculties of body, mind and speech so that all of their energies may be spent in pursuit of the spiritual life. While specifically prescribed for monks and nuns, observance of the *guptis* to a lesser degree is also recommended for laypeople.

The three *guptis* are commonly grouped with the five *samitis* (regulations), whose purpose is to reduce the likelihood of harming other living beings, even the smallest of creatures. The five *samitis* are the regulation of walking, speaking, accepting alms, picking things up and putting them

down, and attending to the calls of nature. The *samitis* and *guptis* overlap to some extent, but in general the *samitis* are concerned with carefulness or vigilance in doing what is right, while the *guptis* lay stress on control and avoidance of what is bad. Observance of the *samitis* and *guptis* are an integral aspect of observance of the five *mahāvratas* (great vows), which form the basis of mendicant life. The five *samitis* and three *guptis* are sometimes known collectively as the *ashṭa-pravachana-mātrikā* or *ashṭa-pravachana-mātā* (eight mothers of doctrine) or the eightfold code of monastic conduct.

Specifically, the three *guptis* are:

1. *Mana-gupti*. Control of the mind; guarding the mind against the ingress of impure thoughts such as lust, anger, hatred, greed, jealousy, *etc.*; preventing the mind from wandering in the realm of sensual pleasures; maintaining a loving and forgiving attitude of mind; developing a yearning for spiritual evolution; spending long hours in focused meditation.
2. *Vachana-gupti*. Control of speech; also called *vāg-gupti*; guarding one's speech so that one does not use harmful, abusive, unkind, careless, untrue, meaningless, embarrassing, or bad language; speaking only when necessary; remaining silent in the face of anger or antagonism; keeping silent for long periods of time as a spiritual discipline.
3. *Kāya-gupti*. Control of the body (*kāya*); giving up unnecessary movement and walking about; remaining still in particular postures, such as *kāyotsarga* ('abandonment of the body', a standing meditation posture); behaving in a becoming and decent manner; carefulness when moving about in order to avoid harming other creatures, however small; remaining motionless for long periods of time as a spiritual discipline.

The three *guptis* (*trigupti*) are mentioned, characteristically alongside the *samitis*, in many Jain texts.<sup>1</sup> Āchārya Kundakunda (traditionally dated to C2nd–3rd CE) provides a basic definition:

Renunciation of passion, delusion, anger, attachment, aversion, and other impure thought activities, is – from the practical point of view – called control of mind (*mana-gupti*).

Renunciation of unworthy gossip relating to women, politics, theft, food, *etc.*, which cause the bondage of evil *karmas*, or refraining from telling falsehoods *etc.*, is called control of speech (*vachana-gupti*).

Renunciation of bodily activity ... is called control of the body (*kāya-gupti*).

You should know that abstaining from attachment *etc.* is control of the mind (*mana-gupti*), and freedom from falsehood *etc.* or silence is control of speech (*vachana-gupti*).

You should know that refraining from bodily activity, non-attachment to the body, restraint of body and renunciation of causing injury *etc.* is called control of body (*kāya-gupti*).

*Kundakunda, Niyamasāra 4:66–70; cf. NAKU pp.34–35*

In a section concerning the *samitis* and the *guptis*, the *Uttarādhyayana Sūtra* analyses the *guptis* of mind and speech into four categories: truth, untruth, a mixture of truth and untruth, and a mixture of what is untrue and what is true. This just about covers all eventualities. In a similar analytical vein, the text then goes on to say:

A zealous monk should prevent his mind and speech from entertaining desires for the misfortune of someone else (*saṃrambha*), from thinking about deeds that would cause misery to living beings (*samārambha*), and from thinking about deeds that would cause their destruction (*ārambha*).

*Uttarādhyayana Sūtra 24:21; cf. SBE45 p.135*

Likewise, regarding *gupti* of the body, it counsels:

When standing, sitting, lying down, jumping, going and in the use of his organs, a zealous monk should prevent his body from entertaining obnoxious desires, from performing deeds that would cause misery to living beings, or that would cause their destruction.

*Uttarādhyayana Sūtra 24:24–23; cf. SBE45 pp.135–36*

The same text also says:

Although those who possess the three *guptis* cannot be disturbed even by well-adorned goddesses, it is nonetheless recommended that monks should live on their own, since this is wholesome in every way. . . .

A man who acts on the impulse of the five *āsravas* (imperfections), does not possess the three *guptis*, has not ceased to injure the six (kinds of living beings), commits cruel deeds, is wicked and violent, has no concern for consequences, is mischievous, and does not subdue his senses – such a man develops the black *leshya* (a bad condition of the soul due to the influence of *karma*). . . .

A man who abstains from constantly thinking about his misery and about sinful deeds, but engages in meditation on the Law and truth only, whose mind is at ease, who controls himself, who practises the

*samitis* and *guptis*, whether he is still subject to passion or free from passion, is calm and subdues his senses – a man of such habits develops the white *leshya* (a good condition).

*Uttarādhyayana* 32:16, 34:21–22, 31–32; cf. *SBE45* pp.186, 199–200

The Prakrit *Samansuttam* – a twentieth-century, consensus text – using the Prakrit *gutti* and *samidi*, summarizes:

As a fence protects a field, a ditch or a rampart protects a city, so the *guttis* protect a monk from sins. . . . A monk who has studied the scriptures keeps his five sense organs under control, practises the three *guttis*, concentrates his mind, and observes humility. . . . The *guttis* and the *samidis* are my protectors and shelters.

*Samansuttam* 415, 477, 510, *SSJV*

See also: **samiti**.

1. E.g. *Uttarādhyayana* 19:88, 20:60, 24:1, 19–26, *passim*, *SBE45* pp.99, 107, 129, 135–36; Āchārya Umāswāmī, *Tattvārtha Sūtra* 9:3, *TSUS*; Kundakunda, *Niyamasāra* 4:66–70, *NAKU* pp.34–35; Nemichandra, *Dravya Saṃgraha* 45, *DSNS* p.72; *Samansuttam* 384–87, 415, 425, *SSJV*.

**gurdwāra, gur duārai** (Pu) *Lit.* the door (*dwāra*) of the *guru*; a place where a *guru* resides or holds *satsang*; a place of Sikh worship. Since the time of the tenth and last *guru*, the Sikh holy book – the *Ādi Granth* – has been regarded as the *guru*. Thus, any building in which a copy of the *Ādi Granth* is housed is called a *gurdwāra*. This may be a room in a private house or a place of public worship, *i.e.* a Sikh temple.

*Gurdwāras* have no statues or idols. The most sacred object is the *Ādi Granth*, usually displayed on a low table draped in fine fabrics. The book is revered as the *guru*, and approached with great respect, devotion, and humility.

The term *gurdwāra* (as one word) does not appear in the *Ādi Granth*, but was first used in the time of the sixth *guru*, Guru Hargobind. The expression *gur duārai* (two words), which does appear in the *Ādi Granth*, can be taken in two senses, neither being the equivalent of *gurdwāra*. It can mean, ‘by means of the *guru*’ or ‘by the grace of the *guru*’, or it can refer to the ‘door of the *guru*’, implying the ‘door’ or ‘third eye’ by which the soul leaves the body. Which meaning is intended is often unclear from the context:

At the *gur duārai*, the *kīrtan* (praises) of the Lord are sung:

meeting with the true *guru* (*satgur*), one chants the Lord’s praises.

*Guru Arjun, Ādi Granth* 1075, *AGK*

Through the *gur duārai*, the Name is obtained:  
 without the true *guru (satgur)*, it is not received.  
*Guru Nānak, Ādi Granth 1015, AGK*

The true *guru (satgur)* has commanded us to do this:  
 through the *gurū duārai*, meditate on the Lord (*Sāhib*)...  
 The Lord (*Sāhib*) ... is ever present:  
 He tears away the veil of doubt,  
 and installs His light (*jot*) within the mind.  
*Guru Amardās, Ādi Granth 554, AGK*

Mystics have said that the Divine is not to be found outside, in any man-made building. He dwells within the human body, which is where He can be found:

Saints say that the Lord whom man seeks is not hidden in forests and mountains, nor does He dwell in temples and mosques, in *gurdwāras* and churches.  
*Maharaj Charan Singh, Light on Sant Mat, Discourse 3, LOSM p.23*

Muslims search for Him in mosques, and Hindus in temples, while Sikhs and Christians look for Him in their *gurdwāras* and churches. Yet He eludes them all. Unless they enter the *sanctum sanctorum* of their own shrine, the human body, they cannot find the indescribable One, for He lives within and can only be found there. ... If there is any true temple, true *gurdwāra*, true mosque or true church, it is our own body. This place God has designed for Himself, and He sits within it.  
*Maharaj Charan Singh, Divine Light, DL pp.28–29*

See also: **dvāra** (8.2).

**guru pūjā, guru pūjana (S), blama mchod pa (T)** *Lit.* worship (*pūjā, mchod pa*) of the master (*guru, blama*); worshipping or reverencing (*pūjana*) the *guru*; specifically, a tantric practice in which offerings are made to one's *guru*; mental or physical worship of one's *guru*, either directly before him physically or inwardly before a mentally conceived image of him. The purpose is to strengthen the relationship with the *guru*, imbibe his spiritual qualities, and attain the level of consciousness he has attained. *Guru Pūjā* is also the name of a Tibetan tantric Buddhist (*Vajrayāna*) text on the subject.

In tantric Buddhism, regular sessions of *guru pūjā* may take the form of a ceremony in which offerings and prayers are made to the *guru*, and to the celestial *buddhas* and *bodhisattvas*, invoking their help and asking for their blessings. *Guru pūjā* may also be performed on behalf of the dying and the deceased, in order to pacify their minds and guide them to a higher rebirth,

even enlightenment. *Guru pūjā* is believed to help purify the mind and to be a means of accumulating merit (*puṇya*).

In the case of physical *guru pūjā* when the *guru* is absent, an item of his clothing, especially his shoes or sandals, may (in some traditions) be substituted. The kind of offerings made are those common to all forms of ritual *pūjā*, viz. food, drinks, sandalwood paste, incense, cooked or uncooked rice, fruits and nuts, sweets, etc. Offerings are made to the accompaniment of chants and *mantras*, and may be performed during the day or night.

In India generally, the *guru* has been the recipient of the highest reverence and respect in all forms of *yoga*, *tantra* and other kinds of spiritual discipline requiring the guidance of a qualified adept. This is true of Hindu, Jain and Buddhist traditions, and is well attested in Indian scriptures. In the epic legends such as the *Mahābhārata* and *Rāmāyaṇa*, the *ṛishis* and *gurus* are always accorded the greatest respect and reverence. At the end of the *Shvetāshvatara Upanishad*, the author declares that his subject matter will be clearest to one who has the same devotion to his *guru* as he does to God:

These things that have been presented  
will shine forth to a high-souled one (*mahātman*) –  
To one who has the highest devotion (*bhakti*) for God,  
and has the same devotion for his spiritual master (*guru*)  
as he does for God –  
Oh, how such things will shine forth  
to such a high-souled one (*mahātman*)!

*Shvetāshvatara Upanishad* 6:23

The *Yogashikhā Upanishad* also repeats a well-known refrain:

The *guru* is *Brahmā*, the *guru* is *Vishṇu*,  
the *guru* is God (*Deva*), the imperishable Being (*Sadāchyuta*).  
No one is greater than the *guru* in all the three worlds.  
Therefore, worship him, with great devotion:  
he has taught us divine wisdom (*divya-jñāna*),  
he is the spiritual guide (*deshika*), he is the supreme Lord Himself.  
Such a person will gain the fruit of wisdom.  
As is the *guru*, so is *Īshvara*; as is *Īshvara*, so is the *guru*:  
between the two, there is no difference.  
He should be adored with great devotion.  
We should not engage in debate concerning the *guru*'s status.  
With devotion, we should conceive in our minds  
the identical nature of the *guru*, God, and the *ātman* (soul, self).

*Yogashikhā Upanishad* 5:56–59; cf. *YU* p.382

See also: **guru** (7.1).

**ḥajj** (A/P) *Lit.* setting out, tending towards, pilgrimage; a pilgrimage to Mecca, and especially to the *Ka'bah*, the holy shrine and the most sacred place in Islam, regarded as the house of God; also known as the greater pilgrimage (*al-ḥajj*), to distinguish it from the *ʿumrah* (lesser pilgrimage), which can be made at any time of the year and includes a shorter sequence of rituals upon arrival at the *Ka'bah* itself, but which is not a substitute for *ḥajj*; hence, *ḥājjī*, one who has undertaken this pilgrimage, and a name that can then be added to one's existing name.

*Hajj* is the fifth pillar of Islam. The first is the profession of the faith (*shahādah*); the second, prayer (*ṣalāh*); the third, fasting during the month of *Ramaḍān* (*ṣawm*); and the fourth almsgiving (*zakāh*). According to the *Qur'ān*, every Muslim is required to make a pilgrimage to the *Ka'bah* at least once in a lifetime, so long as they are physically and financially able, and as long as their absence places no hardship on their family:

Pilgrimage (*ḥajj*) to the House (*i.e.* *Ka'bah*) is a duty men owe to *Allāh* – for those who can make the journey.

*Qur'ān* 3:97; cf. AYA, KPA, MGK

If necessary, *ḥajj* can be performed by proxy, a relative or friend who is going on the pilgrimage being appointed as a stand-in.

The sequence of pilgrimage rites was established by Muḥammad in the *Qur'ān*, but variations have arisen, and many of the pilgrims do not visit the various Meccan sites in the correct order. The full cycle of rites takes place in the month of *Dhū al-Ḥijjah*, the last month of the Muslim calendar, beginning on the seventh and ending on the twelfth or thirteenth. The Islamic calendar is based on lunar cycles, each year having 354 or 355 days. Since the solar cycle has approximately 365¼ days, individual months of the Muslim calendar move backwards through the solar or seasonal year on a 32½ year cycle.

About six miles outside Mecca, at various specified points, the pilgrim enters a state of holiness and purity (*iḥrām*), performing various cleansing rituals. A man dons a white, two-piece seamless *iḥrām* garment. One piece of the garment is wrapped around the loins, and the other is thrown over the shoulders. Although no traditional dress is prescribed for women, they also wear white robes. A man shaves his head, and trims his beard and nails. During the period of the rite, the pilgrim refrains from sexual activity, and cuts neither hair nor nails.

On the seventh day of *Dhū al-Ḥijjah*, a special service is held at the Sacred Mosque, where the pilgrim is reminded of his duties as a Muslim. The pilgrimage rites begin on the eighth. The pilgrim performs seven circumambulations (*ṭawāf*) of the sacred shrine known as the *Ka'bah* (housed in the Sacred Mosque, also called the House), where he either kisses the Black



Stone (*Ḥajar al-Aswad*) or touches it with his fingers, immediately putting his fingers to his lips. He prays twice in the direction of the sacred stone of *Maqām Ibrāhīm* and the *Ka'bah*, and runs seven times between the summits of the small hills of Mount Ṣafā and Mount Marwah.

Between the eighth and the twelfth days, the pilgrim first visits Minā, a few miles distant, from where he journeys on to 'Arafāt, where he must hear a sermon, and spend at least one afternoon. He must also spend a night at Muzdalifah (between 'Arafāt and Minā), and – on the last day of *ihrām*, the *ʿīd* (festival) of sacrifice – he sacrifices an animal (*qurbān*) in memory of Abraham's sacrifice. His head is then usually shaved once again. Additionally, on three successive days, he must throw seven stones at each of the three pillars in Minā, the pillars exemplifying various devils. Following this, he returns to Mecca to perform a farewell circling of the *Ka'bah* before leaving the city.

The *ḥajj* is performed by about two million people every year, about half coming from non-Arab countries. The event serves as a unifying experience, where Muslims of diverse social and cultural backgrounds come together and meet on a common religious platform.

The faithful, says the *Qur'ān*, will come from all directions, and many will endure hardship on the road:

Proclaim the pilgrimage (*ḥajj*) among men: they will come to you on foot and mounted on every kind of camel, lean on account of journeys through deep and distant mountain highways.

*Qur'ān* 22:27; cf. AYA

And it broadly outlines the rites associated with the *ḥajj*:

Complete the *ḥajj* or *ʿumrah* in the service of *Allāh*, but if you are prevented, send an offering for sacrifice, such as you may find, and do not shave your heads until the offering reaches the place of sacrifice.

And if any of you is ill, or has an ailment in his scalp (necessitating shaving), he should in compensation either fast, or feed the poor, or offer sacrifice. And when you are in peaceful conditions again, if any one wishes to continue the *ʿumrah* on to the *ḥajj*, he must make an offering such as he can afford. But if he cannot afford it, he should fast three days during the *ḥajj* and seven days on his return, making ten days in all. This is for those whose household is not in the precincts of the Sacred Mosque (*al-Masjid al-Ḥarām*), and fear *Allāh*, and know that *Allāh*, is strict in punishment.

Make the *ḥajj* in the appointed months. If any one undertakes that duty therein, let there be no obscenity, nor wickedness, nor quarrelling

during the *ḥajj*, and whatever good you do, *Allāh* knows of it. And take provisions for the journey, but the best of provisions is right conduct. So fear Me, you that are wise.

It is no crime in you if you seek the bounty of your Lord (during pilgrimage). Then, when you pour down from Mount ‘Arafāt, celebrate the praises of *Allāh* at the Sacred Monument (*al-Mash‘ar al-Ḥarām*), and celebrate His praises as He has directed you, even though, before this, you went astray.

Then pass on at a quick pace from the place whence it is usual for the multitude so to do, and ask for *Allāh*’s forgiveness. For *Allāh* is oft-forgiving, most merciful.

So when you have accomplished your holy rites, celebrate the praises of *Allāh*, as you used to celebrate the praises of your fathers – truly, with far more heart and soul. . . .

Celebrate the praises of *Allāh* during the appointed days. But if any one hastens to leave in two days, there is no blame on him, and if any one stays on, there is no blame on him, if his aim is to do right. Then fear *Allāh*, and know that you will surely be gathered unto Him.

*Qur‘ān* 2:196–200, 203; cf. AYA

Permission to “seek the bounty of your Lord” during *ḥajj* refers to the traditional custom not to get involved in business while in Minā. The verse grants permission to do so when descending from Mount ‘Arafāt.

On at least one *ḥajj* in the past, the occasion was used to announce the annulment of treaties with neighbouring non-Muslim countries:

An announcement from *Allāh* and His Messenger to the people on the day of the great pilgrimage (*ḥajj*) – that *Allāh* and His Messenger dissolve treaty obligations with the pagans. If, then, you repent, it were best for you. But if you turn away, know that you cannot escape *Allāh*. And proclaim a grievous penalty to those who reject faith.

*Qur‘ān* 9:3; cf. AYA, MGK

Although many Sufis, as a part of their Muslim faith, have undertaken a *ḥajj*, a number have pointed out that the real pilgrimage is the inner spiritual journey to God. Some, such as Abū Sa‘īd al-Khayr (967–1049), actively discouraged their disciples from going on a *ḥajj*. Abū Sa‘īd is reported to have advised those who were thinking of it to visit Sarakhs (a city in Khurāsān), and there to circumambulate the tomb of his master, Abū al-Faḍl Ḥasan, seven times, and to regard their purpose as accomplished.<sup>1</sup>

Other Sufis, such as Hujwīrī, have found a variety of symbolic mystical meanings in each of the various rituals that make up the *ḥajj*:

The pilgrimage (*ḥajj*) is binding on every Muslim of sound mind who is able to perform it and has reached manhood. It consists of putting on the pilgrim's garb at the proper place, in standing on (Mount) 'Arafāt, in circumambulating the *Ka'bah*, and in running between Ṣafā and Marwah. One must not enter the sacred territory (*ḥaram*) without being clad as a pilgrim (*bī iḥrām*).

The sacred territory (*ḥaram*) is so called because it contains the Station of Abraham (*Maqām-i Ibrāhīm*, a sacred stone close to the *Ka'bah*). Abraham had two stations: the station of his body, namely Mecca, and the station of his soul, namely, friendship (*khullat*) (with God). Whoever seeks his bodily station must renounce all lusts and pleasures, and put on the pilgrim's garb, and clothe himself in a winding sheet (*kafan*), and refrain from hunting lawful game, and keep all his senses under strict control, and be present at 'Arafāt, and go thence to Muzdalifah and Mash'ar al-Ḥarām, and pick up stones and circumambulate the *Ka'bah* and visit Minā, and stay there three days and throw stones in the prescribed manner, and cut his hair and perform the sacrifice, and then put on his (ordinary) clothes.

But whoever seeks his spiritual station must renounce familiar associations, bid farewell to pleasures and take no thought of anything other than God (for his looking toward the phenomenal world is forbidden). Then he must stand on the 'Arafāt of gnosis (*ma'rifat*), and from there set out for the Muzdalifah and amity (*ulfat*), and from there send his heart to circumambulate the temple of divine purification (*tanzīh*), and throw away the stones of passion and corrupt thoughts in the Minā of faith, and sacrifice the lower soul (*nafs*) on the altar of mortification, and arrive at the station of friendship (*khullat*).

To enter the bodily station is to be secure from enemies and their swords, but to enter the spiritual station is to be secure from separation (from God) and its consequences.

Muḥammad ibn al-Faḍl says: "I wonder at those who seek His temple in this world: why do not they seek contemplation of Him in their hearts?"

*Hujwīrī, Kashf al-Mahjūb XXII, KMM pp.422–24; cf. KM pp.326–27*

Hujwīrī concludes that the spiritual *ḥajj*, carried out within oneself, requires no outward physical journey at all:

Anyone who is absent from God at Mecca is in the same position as if he were absent from God in his own house, and anyone who is present with God in his own house is in the same position as if he were present with God at Mecca.

*Hujwīrī, Kashf al-Mahjūb XXII, KMM p.427, KM p.329*

Nāṣir-i Khusraw (1004–1088) likewise describes the symbolic meaning of the various rites by means of an anecdotal dialogue:

The pilgrims had returned, revered and honoured, giving thanks to God for His compassion and mercy, from the dangers and hardships of the Arabian journey, and saved – no doubt – from hell and a painful chastisement, having walked from ‘Arafāt to Mecca and answered the pilgrim’s call with joy, having performed all the duties of the *ḥajj*, and returned home hale and hearty. I decided to go and welcome them back but I’m afraid I asked too many questions and put my foot in it.

Among the caravan, one was a particular friend of mine, a dear man. “Tell me how you made it through this dangerous journey,” I said. “All the time you’ve been away I’ve had nothing but sorrow for companionship. Congratulations, *ḥājjī*! There’s no one like you in our whole province, I’m sure. Tell me how you visited that sacred place, with what honour and dignity you beheld it. Tell me about donning the pilgrim’s robe, and what your inner intentions were at that moment. Did you prohibit to yourself everything other than the eternal Lord?”

“Well, . . . no,” he admitted.

“Did you answer the call out of knowledge and with due reverence? Did you hear the summons of the Lord, and answer back, like Moses?”

“Well, . . . um, . . .”

At ‘Arafāt, when in the presence of God, did you become His Knower, and the denier of your self? Did the breeze of gnosis blow upon you?”

“... uh, . . . to tell the truth, I . . .”

“When you sacrificed the obligatory sheep did you see yourself in proximity to Him and think of the sheep as your carnal soul (*nafs*, lower mind)?”

“My what? I say, . . .”

“When you entered the sacred grounds were you safe from the evil of your lower self and from the sorrow of separation, the chastisement of Hell?”

“You see, actually, . . .”

“When you threw stones at the Accursed One did you fling out of yourself all bad habits and reprehensible acts?”

“Umm, . . . um, . . .”

“When you prayed at the Station of Abraham did you, in truth, faith and certitude, submit the very core of your being to the Absolute?”

“The what?”

“At the time of circumambulation, when you were no doubt running around fast as an ostrich, did you remind yourself of the circling cherubim around the celestial throne?”

“Really, Nāṣir, what . . .?”

“Did you behold in your purity of heart the two worlds and become inwardly free of both paradise and hell?”

“NO! NO! NO!”

“Now that you’ve come back, is your heart pained by separation from the *Ka’bah*? Did you bury your selfish ego in the tomb . . . or are you still no better than a decaying bag of bones?”

“I must admit,” he answered, “that in all these matters I seem not to have known the true from the false.”

“Then my friend,” I said, “you have not made a pilgrimage, and have not taken up residence in the abode of annihilation (of self). You have simply visited Mecca and come back, having purchased the toils of the desert with your silver. If you ever go again, bear in mind all that I have said.”

*Nāṣir-i Khusraw, Dīvān, DNKR pp.259–60, NKD pp.80–82*

The same meaning is explicit in a similar dialogue attributed to Junayd:

“From the hour when you first journeyed from your home have you also been journeying away from all sins?” He said, “No.” “Then,” said Junayd, “you have made no journey.”

“At every stage where you halted for the night did you traverse a station on the way to God?” “No,” he replied. “Then,” said Junayd, “you have not trodden the road, stage by stage.”

“When you put on the pilgrim’s garb at the proper place, did you discard the qualities of human nature as you cast off your clothes?” “No.” “Then you have not put on the pilgrim’s garb.”

“When you stood at ‘Arafāt, did you stand one moment in contemplation of God?” “No.” “Then you have not stood at ‘Arafāt.”

“When you went to Muzdalifah and achieved your desire, did you renounce all sensual desires?” “No.” “Then you have not gone to Muzdalifah.”

“When you circumambulated the *Ka’bah*, did you behold the immaterial beauty of God in the abode of purification?” “No.” “Then you have not circumambulated the *Ka’bah*.”

“When you ran between Ṣafā and Marwah, did you attain to purity (*ṣafā*) and virtue (*muruwat*)?” “No.” “Then you have not run.”

“When you came to Minā, did all your wishes (*munā*) cease?” “No.” “Then you have not yet visited Minā.”

“When you reached the place of slaughter and offered sacrifice, did you sacrifice the objects of worldly desire?” “No.” “Then you have not sacrificed.”

“When you threw the pebbles, did you throw away whatever sensual

thoughts were accompanying you?” “No.” “Then you have not thrown the pebbles, and you have not performed the pilgrimage.”

*Junayd; cf. in MOI pp.91–92*

Other Sufis have conveyed the same message. Rūmī says simply that the real *ḥajj* is not to the *Kaʿbah*, but to *Allāh* Himself, within:

The pilgrimage (*ḥajj*) consists of visiting the House:  
But the pilgrimage (*ḥajj*) worthy of a true man  
is to the Lord of the House (*Rabb al-Bayt*).

*Rūmī, Maṣnavī IV:15; cf. MJR4 p.273*

Ḥāfiẓ says that he has made that journey:

Boast not to me of the vision you behold,  
O leader of the *ḥajj* (*malik al-ḥājj*);  
For you behold the House (*Khānah*, i.e. the *Kaʿbah*),  
while I behold the Master of the House (*Khānah Khudā*).

*Ḥāfiẓ, Divān, DHA p.178, DIH p.303; cf. DHWC (392:4) p.671*

Abū Yazīd al-Bisṭāmī says that while pilgrims circumambulate the *Kaʿbah*, the lovers of God keep their focus on the divine “throne” within:

Pilgrims (*ḥājjīs*) circumambulate the House with their bodies, seeking subsistence. The people of lovingkindness (*ahl-i maḥabbat*) circumambulate the throne (of God) through the heart, seeking encounter.

*Abū Yazīd al-Bisṭāmī, in Tadhkirat al-Awliyāʾ I, TAN1 p.164, in SSE3 p.103*

Some Sufis have indicated that even acts of charity are to be regarded as more beneficial than a *ḥajj*:

It is related that a person seeking advice from Bishr Ḥāfi said, “I have two thousand lawful dirhams and want to make the pilgrimage (*ḥajj*).”

Ḥāfi replied, “Is your intention to see the sights or to make God contented? If your intention is to make God contented, then make a loan to a poor person or give the money to an orphan or to a large family, for the ease which you will bring to their hearts is nobler than a hundred pilgrimages (*ḥajj*).”

“But I would like to make the pilgrimage (*ḥajj*),” the other insisted.

Ḥāfi replied, “This is because you have acquired these funds unrighteously. As a consequence, you will not be at ease until you spend them unrighteously.”

*ʿAṭṭār, Tadhkirat al-Awliyāʾ I, TAN1 p.111, in SSE3 p.104*

On the path to God, the Sufis – as in all other mystical traditions – emphasize the importance of the spiritual master. To seek out the feet of the master and to dwell there is regarded as the highest *ḥajj*. ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt Hamadānī writes:

Your Quranic recitation, your prayers, your fasting, your almsgiving, your *ḥajj* and *jihād* (holy war) is that you seek to attain closeness to the sandals of a man, so that you may make the earth on which he walks day and night your eye’s collyrium, that perhaps after spending fifty years in his service, he may one day cast his glance (*naẓar*) upon you and you will be blessed by fortune. But what can you understand of this which you hear – that by one glance the Beloved bestows myriad favours? No, “One who has not tasted it does not know its flavour.”

*‘Ayn al-Quḍāt Hamadānī, Tamhīdāt, Introduction, TQH p.87, in HSL1 pp.289–90*

‘Aṭṭār similarly writes that the real pilgrimage is to travel away from the “self” towards the master, the “one who guides aright”:

What is the pilgrimage (*ḥajj*)? –  
travelling from the self (*khvud*).

In which direction? –  
towards the one who guides aright.

*‘Aṭṭār, Dīvān, Qaṣā’id 16:870, DASN p.56, in SSE3 p.103*

Rūmī says that the important qualification of such a master is his spiritual attainment, not his country or colour:

While you remain in the realms of forms,  
you are an idol worshipper (*but-parast*):  
pass beyond the form and behold the Reality!  
If you are a man (bound) for the pilgrimage (*ḥajj*),  
seek a pilgrim (*ḥājjī*) as your companion,  
whether he be a Hindu or a Turcoman or an Arab.  
Do not look at his figure and colour,  
look at his purpose and intention.  
If he is black, but he is in accord with you:  
then call him white;  
For spiritually his complexion is the same as yours.

*Rūmī, Maṣnavī I:2893–96; cf. MJR2 p.158*

In his diary, Amīr Ḥasan Sijzī records many incidents and discussions held with his Shaykh, Nizām al-Dīn Awliyā’. In an entry dated Wednesday, 27th of *Safar*, 714 AH (May 12th 1314), he writes:

There was a problem I had been pondering, and that day I decided to broach it with the master. The problem was this: which of two disciples is superior, that disciple who neglects the canonical prayers and says few invocations, but feels much love for his master and is wholly reliant on him, or that other disciple who is faultlessly obedient, says innumerable invocations, and also goes on the *hajj*, yet loves his master little and trusts him haltingly?

“The one who loves his master and relies on him,” replied the master. Then on his blessed lips came this pronouncement: “The disciple who loves and trusts in his master gains in one moment a spiritual benefit greater than that gained in all the obedient moments of that other disciple.”

*Nizām al-Dīn Awliyāʾ, Morals for the Heart 4:4, FFNA pp.207–8, MHN pp.219–20*

See also: ‘**īd**, **iḥrām**, **Kaʿbah**, ‘**umrah**.

1. *Abū Saʿīd al-Khayr, Ḥālāt va Sukhanān, HSS p.44, in SIM p.62.*

**Ḥanukkah** (He) *Lit.* dedication, rededication; an eight-day celebration also known as the Feast of Lights, commemorating the victorious revolt (167–160 BCE) by the Maccabean forces (led by Judah Maccabee) over Hellenistic-Syrian domination, and the subsequent rededication of the Temple in Jerusalem, which was necessary due to its pollution during the Greek occupation. As part of the dedication, oil lamps were lit, and despite there being enough oil for only one day, the oil lasted for eight days. This is regarded as the miracle of *Ḥanukkah*.

A nine-branched *menorah* is used during *Ḥanukkah* – eight branches for each of the eight days, and a ninth, called a *shamash* (helper, servant), which lights the others.

See also: **menorah** (4.1, 7.1)

**hào** (C) *Lit.* assumed name; alternative, literary or honorific name, either self-adopted or received from a religious superior or spiritual master. See **dàohào**, **fǎhào**.

**Hari kīrtan** (H/Pu), **Har kīrtan**, **Har kīrat** (Pu) *Lit.* the music (*kīrtan*) of God (*Hari*); the divine Melody; the *Shabd* (Sound, Word) or creative power of God; also, devotional songs, hymns or music in praise of or love for God; hence, the praise of God.



When mystics speak of singing the praises of the Lord or of worshipping His Name, the expression is generally often used as a metaphor for inner contact with the sweet and life-giving music of the Word or mystic Name of God. Later generations, however, on reading or translating the mystics' writings, unaware of the mystic nature of this Melody, interpret it as outward music and the singing of hymns. Since the mind derives some satisfaction from singing devotional songs, the attention is diverted from true mystic worship and devotion, and deprived of hearing the real Music within:

Listening to external music (*nādbād*),  
 he becomes trapped like a deer.  
 He becomes happy,  
 but does not know the secret of the inner Sound.

*Bhāī Gurdās, Kabī Savaiye 412*

Transcend the external music (*nādbād*)  
 and merge with the Unstruck (*anāhad*) (music).

*Bhāī Gurdās, Kabī Savaiye 11*

In the writings of the Sikh *gurus*, the meaning is sometimes ambiguous, and *Har kīrtan* can be interpreted as either external or internal music. But considering what the *gurus* have said about external music, and in the full context of all their writings, their mystical meaning is very clear. In many places, they are explicit. External music, for example, cannot be expected to erase the sins or *karmas* of past lives:

Millions of sins are erased by serving the humble saints,  
 and singing the glorious *Har kīrtan* with love.  
 One finds peace in this world, and one's face is radiant in the next world,  
 by associating with the humble saints, through great good fortune.

*Guru Arjun, Ādi Granth 610, AGK*

The “holy practice” of repeating the Name refers specifically to listening to the inner music. *Kaliyuga* is the present age of darkness and spiritual ignorance:

*Har kīrat* and repetition of the Name (*Nām*)  
 in *kaliyuga* is the noble and holy practice.

*Guru Rāmdās, Ādi Granth 1314, AGT*

It is the divine – not external – music that is eternal:

Royal powers, wealth, and worldly involvements  
 are of no use at all.

*Har kīrtan* is my support:  
 this wealth is everlasting (*nihchal*).  
*Guru Arjun, Ādi Granth 398, AGK*

See also: **Hari Kīrtan** (3.2), **kīrtana**.

**havan(a)** (S/H) *Lit.* fire; a Hindu and Jain religious rite in which offerings of ghee, incense and similar items are thrown into a fire, to the chanting of *mantras*; the fire sacrifice; oblation to gods through the medium of fire. *Havana* is used synonymously with *homa*, both being derived from the Sanskrit root *hu* (to offer, to present, to make an offering to or in honour of a deity). *Havan* is generally used in North India, and *hom* in South India. *Havana* is also a name of *Agni*, the deity of fire. See **homa**.

**heiau** (Hw) *Lit.* a native Hawaiian temple; a platform made of stone; a sacrificial altar; an altar for spiritual rites performed under the supervision of a *kahuna* (shaman).

The top of the *heiau* was usually flat and was high enough to be a vantage point over the surrounding vegetation and terrain. *Heiau* were constructed for a variety of purposes, which to some extent dictated their design. Some were placed near the ocean to observe currents and tides, and were useful for spotting schools of fish. Some were located next to marshes to observe fowl and other food resources. Others were used for praying to the gods and ancestors for rain. Still others were constructed in the hills and mountains to pray to the gods or offer sacrifices (animal and human). Visitors to a *heiau* were expected to show great respect and always to ask permission of the ‘*aumākua*’ (ancestors) before entering. Visitors coming to pray would offer a gift such as a stone wrapped in a *ti* leaf (a Hawaiian broad-leafed plant, known for its cooling effect). Food was also offered to the gods of the *heiau*. The gods would take the spirit essence in the food, and the humans would then eat the physical food.

Some *heiau* were built with hundreds of thousands of rocks and stones. The chief would approve the design of the *heiau* by viewing a mock-up made out of moist sand, and a *kahuna* would oversee the construction. Other kinds of *heiau* were built at ground level and had a small stone wall surrounding them. They were places of worship or healing where one could find peace by communicating with the ‘*aumākua*. For treating the sick, a *kahuna* would use a *heiau ho ‘ōla*, a temple made using *tapa* (cloth made from bark):

In a typical *heiau*, such buildings consisted of an ‘*anu ‘u*’ (tower), a tall structure (perhaps 24-feet high) made of strong timber and covered with *kapa* (treated *tapa*). This three-storey structure served several

purposes. Offerings were made on the first storey. The second saw rituals performed by the *kahuna pule* (prayer *kahuna*) or *kahuna nui* (chief *kahuna*) and his assistants. The third storey was sacrosanct; only the ruling chief and *kahuna* could tread there. Here the *akua* (god) took possession of the chief or *kahuna* and through him, revealed the future. It was this last usage that caused the ‘*anu‘u*’ to be termed an ‘oracle tower’.

*Scott Cunningham, Hawaiian Religion & Magic, HRMC p.88*

On the island of O‘ahu, at the top of Aiea Heights, lies a healing *heiau* called *Kea‘iwa*. Many offerings are left there by visitors even today, and the *heiau* itself is protected within a state park. People still go there for its peaceful atmosphere and healing energy. In stark contrast, above Waimea Bay lies the *Pu‘u o Mahuka heiau*. This was a *luakini* (large) *heiau* dedicated to *Kū*, the god of destruction and death, a prayer temple for ruling chiefs where human sacrifices were made. People often avoid this *heiau* because of its disturbing *mana* (energy).

See also: **kahuna** (7.1), **pule** (8.5).

**heresy** Doctrine, belief or opinion contrary to an orthodox religious doctrine or to a commonly accepted belief or theory of any kind; the act of maintaining unorthodox doctrine, belief, or opinion; a doctrine rejected as false by a religious body; from the Greek *hairesis* (a choice, something chosen), from *hairein* (to choose); from Latin, *haeresis* (sect).

Historically, the Christian approach to heresy has been more radical than in Hinduism and Buddhism. While Judaism accepts the notion of heresy, Jewish heretics have generally fared better than their Christian and Muslim counterparts.

The Greek word *hairesis* was originally a neutral term for the holders of a particular set of philosophical opinions. The first-century Jewish historian, Josephus, for instance, uses *hairesis* for the three main Jewish schools of his time, the Sadducees, Pharisees, and the Essenes.<sup>1</sup> Using a similar word, in *Acts*, Paul is described to the Roman governor Felix as the “leader of the *hairesis* (sect) of the Nazarenes”.<sup>2</sup> Only in the hands of the Christian Church did the term develop a negative connotation, becoming the word for any sect regarded as heretical. Since the Church believed its doctrines to be divinely imparted, inspired by the Holy Spirit, with it alone as the sole authorized exponent, any doctrine or interpretation that differed from the orthodox was deemed heretical and untrue.

The existence of alternative Christian perspectives is apparent even in the New Testament. Paul himself, who maintained that the teaching he learnt “by revelation”<sup>3</sup> was the same as that of the apostles (though he met Peter on only

two occasions), clearly encountered other Christian groups who held views that differed from his own. Later, pseudo-epigraphic New Testament letters, like *2 Peter* and the letters to Titus and Timothy, demonstrate a widening gulf between Pauline Christianity and other versions of the Christian message, and an attempt to stem 'heretical' elements within the fold.

In the early second century, the apostolic fathers looked to the prophets and the apostles as their sources of doctrine. Later second-century fathers adhered to a loose body of doctrine handed down from apostolic times. Later still, after the Emperor Constantine had adopted Christianity in the early fourth century, putting an end to the persecution of Christians, orthodox (*i.e.* Pauline) Christian doctrine was further defined and formalized by Christian bishops who met infrequently at ecclesiastical councils. Eventually, in the Western Church, the decisions of these councils had to be ratified by the Pope.

It is clear that many streams of Christian thought and doctrine were prevalent in the early centuries. Some, such as Arianism, were based upon differences of theological doctrine. Others, like gnosticism – of which there were many flavours – had a more fundamentally different approach to the truth of Christianity. Before the era of Constantine, when Christianity was still essentially illegal under Roman law and liable to occasional outbreaks of persecution, the 'orthodox' could do little except to castigate, demonize and excommunicate the 'heretics', and to destroy their books whenever they had the opportunity.

But from 313 onwards, with the advent of Constantine and the Christian emperors following him, Christianity was enabled, financed, and generally encouraged to develop its authoritative and administrative framework. Increasingly rigorous anti-heresy legislation was also enacted. Not only could heretics be excommunicated and anathematized, and their books burnt, but rigorous measures were also taken against their persons and their property. Heresy was made a crime against the state.

In the legal code of the Emperor Theodosius I (379–392) heretics were legally styled as infamous persons; all interaction with them was forbidden; they were removed from all offices of profit and dignity in the civil administration, and burdensome offices were imposed upon them; they were disqualified from disposing of their own estates by will, or of accepting estates bequeathed to them by others; they were denied the right of giving or receiving donations, and of contracting, buying, and selling; they were subject to heavy fines, and were often publicly outlawed and banished, in many cases being whipped before being sent into exile.

As early as 382, heresy was made a crime punishable by death, a law passed by Theodosius against the Manichaeans, Encratites, and others. Heretics were forbidden to teach, either publicly or privately; to hold meetings or public debates; to build meeting houses or to use money bequeathed to them for that purpose; to appoint bishops, presbyters, or any other clergy. Slaves were

permitted to inform against heretical masters and to purchase their freedom by conversion to Christianity. The children of heretical parents were denied their inheritance unless they returned to the Church. Heretical books were ordered to be burned.<sup>4</sup>

The result was outbreaks of zealous and violent suppression. During this period, the ancient library in Alexandria was burnt to the ground (in 391) on the instigation of Archbishop Theophilus. Even earlier, certainly before 342, the Nag Hammadi gnostic library, unearthed in the mid-twentieth century, was buried for the benefit of posterity, because of the advancing persecutions of the orthodox.

After the fall of the Roman empire in the West (476), legislation was enacted with even greater rigour by the invading barbarians who had converted to Christianity. But worse was yet to come. The Inquisition, formally founded in 1232, whose practices must mark the nadir of 'doctrinal cleansing', was preceded by a steady rise in the murderous suppression of heresy. The eleventh, twelfth and early thirteenth centuries saw the burgeoning of the Cathar and Albigensian 'heresies', a gnostic movement threatening the authority of the Church, and provoking the most violent measures yet employed. The burning of heretics had been first instituted in the eleventh century, but at the massacre of Beziers in 1209, six or seven thousand people were slaughtered at the church of St Madeleine alone.

In 1184, the Synod of Verona required every bishop to seek out heretics in their dioceses, and hand them over to the secular authorities. Later synods and councils reinforced the order. The Synod of Toulouse (1229) established two inquisitors in every parish, a priest and a layman. It became a legal requirement to denounce heretics, the names of witnesses being kept secret. After 1243, when Pope Innocent IV sanctioned the laws of Emperor Frederick II and Louis IX against heretics, torture was used in trials, and the 'guilty' were handed over to the secular authorities to be burnt at the stake. The beliefs and statements even of good Christian souls were scrutinized minutely for expressions of deviance and 'heresy'. Those espousing mystical doctrines or making claims to mystical experience were especially targeted. Some of the brightest lights in Christian literature, including Origen, Evagrius of Pontus, John Wycliffe, Jan van Ruysbroek, Meister Eckhart, Johann Tauler, Jacopone da Todi, Luis de León, Martin Luther, and many others, were all either suspected, accused or convicted of heresy; in the case of Origen and Evagrius, long after they had died.

The sixteenth century was marked by the Reformation, which began as a well-intentioned attempt to reform the Roman Catholic Church, but ended in the formation of the Protestant movement, and the breakdown of Western Christianity's doctrinal unity. Now, both the Catholic and Protestant sides, each believing themselves to be divinely armed with the truth, felt at liberty to denounce as heretics all who disagreed with them.

With the gradual increase in tolerance, and the twentieth-century ecumenical movement seeking some degree of Christian unity, it is now possible for one group to adhere to a body of doctrine without feeling the necessity to denounce as heretics those who maintain different beliefs.<sup>5</sup>

See also: **gnostic** (7.1), **Gnosticism** (1.6), **reincarnation and transmigration (in Christianity)** (6.3).

1. Josephus, *Jewish War* 2:8.1, *Antiquities of the Jews* 13:5.9.
2. *Acts* 24:5; cf. *Acts* 28:22.
3. *Galatians* 1:11–12.
4. “De Haereticis,” *Codex Theodosianus* 16:5; see “heresy,” *Catholic Encyclopedia*, 1910.
5. Some information drawn from “heresy,” *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 2001.

**hitgallut, giluy** (He) *Lit.* revelation; the revelation of the Ten Commandments and the remainder of the *Torah* (i.e. the *Pentateuch*) to Moses on Mount Sinai, according to the biblical account in *Exodus*.<sup>1</sup>

The story of Moses’ revelation has been understood metaphorically by Jewish philosophers and mystics in at least two ways: firstly, as the divine inspiration received by Moses to write the scrolls under the guidance of the holy spirit (*ruah ha-kodesh*); and secondly, as Moses’ spiritual ascent and experience in a higher dimension, in which he experienced the divine power at first hand – i.e. the essential or unwritten, ineffable *Torah*. The thirteenth-century kabbalist Abraham Abulafia understood the ascent to have been both material and spiritual or prophetic:

For Moses ascended to the mountain, and he also ascended to the divine level. That ascent is combined with a revealed matter, and with a matter which is hidden; the revealed (matter) is the ascent of the mountain, and the hidden (aspect) is the level of prophecy.

*Abraham Abulafia, Hayyei ha-Nefesh, HNAA fol.7b–8a, in MEAA p.157*

The contemporary rabbi Arthur Green (b.1941) points out that the fundamental nature of “revelation” is the realization that the Divine is all that truly exists:

What then do we mean by revelation? ... Here, too, the notion of primordial *Torah* is the key. Revelation does not necessarily refer to the giving of a truth that we did not possess previously. On the contrary, the primary meaning of revelation means that our eyes are now opened, we are able to see that which had been true all along but was hidden

from us. . . . The truth that God underlies reality and always has now becomes completely apparent. . . .

What is it that is revealed at Sinai? Revelation is the self-disclosure of God. *Hitgallut*, the Hebrew term for ‘revelation’, is in the reflexive mode, meaning that the gift of Sinai is the gift of God’s own self. God has nothing but God to reveal to us. . . . The ‘good news’ of Sinai is all there in God’s “I am.”<sup>2</sup>

*Arthur Green, Ehyeh: A Kabbalah for Tomorrow, EKTG pp.34–35*

Moses himself explicitly urged the Israelites to look within themselves to find God, “in your mouth and in your heart”:

For this commandment (*miṣvah*) which I command you this day is not hidden from you, nor is it far off. It is not in heaven, that you should say, “Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?” Nor is it beyond the sea, that you should say, “Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it to us, that we may hear it, and do it?” But the Word (*Dibbur*) is very near to you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it.

*Deuteronomy 30:11–14, JCL*

Discussing this passage, Green points out that in Jewish thought there is an underlying tension between a ‘vertical’ conception of God who lives in heaven, away and apart from human existence, who is to be reached, metaphorically, by climbing a mountain, and the inner understanding of God who can be reached by ascending within to inner realms or stages of consciousness. Green asks:

What does the *Torah* mean here? It does not sound as though Moses is saying: “God’s teaching indeed used to be in heaven, but I have already brought it down for you!” This seems to be a rather different Moses than the one who climbs the mountain. Here he seems to be telling us that the journey to *Torah* is, and always has been, an inward rather than a vertical journey. The only place you have to travel to find God’s word is to your own heart. The journey to the heart is the mystical quest.

*Arthur Green, Ehyeh: A Kabbalah for Tomorrow, EKTG p.21*

The prophetic experiences that Moses had on Mount Sinai and earlier at the burning bush<sup>3</sup> indicate that he underwent a mystic transformation, an experience of the one divine Reality within. He came in touch with his mystic heart. At the most sublime level, the covenant between God and the Israelites was God’s pledge to endow them with a state of spiritual consciousness symbolized as a land of milk and honey – the true “promised” land – provided that

the Israelites stayed true to their side of the bargain – to worship *Yahweh* and be obedient to His will.

1. *Exodus* 20:1–23:33.
2. *Exodus* 3:14.
3. *Exodus* 3:1–4:17.

**ḥizb** (A/P) *Lit.* group, faction; hence, a party, a troupe; a religious fraternity; also, part, portion, division; hence, the sixty divisions of the *Qurʾān*, an arrangement designed to facilitate its recitation over a particular period of time, especially during the month of *Ramaḍān*; also, a group of liturgical formulae, a part of a prayer or litany, a long voluntary prayer repeated after obligatory prayers, the prayers associated with a particular religious fraternity, prayers connected with particular activities such as those repeated by travellers by sea, and so on.

In Sufism, a *shaykh* would sometimes give his disciples not only a *dhikr* formula to repeat, but also a *ḥizb*. The term appears in the *Qurʾān* as *ḥizb Allāh* (party of God), where it means the lovers of God, as contrasted with the *ḥizb al-Shayṭān* (party of Satan), those who turn away from God.<sup>1</sup>

See also: **ḥizb Allāh** (7.1).

1. *Qurʾān* 58:19–22.

**hoʻoponopono** (Hw) *Lit.* to make things right (*pono*); a ceremony to ease tensions in the family (*ʻohana*).

Hawaiian families, when confronted with anger and ill-feeling, would turn to the practice of *hoʻoponopono* to heal themselves, and cool down afterwards with a period of quiet (*hoʻomalū*). The idea was to give everyone in the family a safe space to express their feelings and to listen to others, to understand their position and forgive (*kala*). *Nānā I Ke Kumu* (‘Look to the Source’), a modern compendium of Hawaiian lore, recounts two incidents in which a *hoʻoponopono* is conducted:

In a pilot programme, one (Queen Liliʻuokalani Children’s) Center social worker used *hoʻoponopono* with troubled Hawaiian families. Her opening prayer, as she recalled it for us, is reminiscent of old Hawaii’s identification of self and problem to the gods:

“I prayed to the Christian God,” she related. “I said, ‘Our dear heavenly Father, we come before Thee, this family and I.’ (I



named each one.) ‘We ask for Thy help, so that all of us may be able to speak clearly from our hearts all that is in them. Help us to open our minds to each other, so we can truly talk to one another and understand each other. We ask Thy help to face things, to express hurt feelings in ways that will not inflict more hurt, to say what we must say in ways that make for understanding.’”

The underlying purpose of this *ho‘oponopono* was, with God’s help, to restore family relationships. Any ‘illness’ to be healed was psychic and emotional.

Another prayerful *ho‘oponopono* of the present was held as a prelude to healing a sick child. The following account does not involve Center clients:

This couple, friends of mine and very Hawaiian, have a little boy about five years old. He came down with this terrible rash that spread to his genitals. The doctors made all sorts of tests and gave him medicines, but the rash just got worse. My friends asked me to get someone to help pray. So I found a woman to conduct *ho‘oponopono*. She went to my friend’s home, and . . . she prayed to Jehovah God. She asked God to show what was the hidden wrong in the family that was hurting the child. She prayed very directly, “O God, You said Yourself that the sins of the father are visited upon the son.” Later, she asked the husband to open and point in the Bible – *wehe i ka Paipala* – and the man put his finger on the passage that tells how David wanted the Queen of Sheba. Then the woman conducting *ho‘oponopono* prayed again and thanked God for revealing the wrong. Then she said to the husband, ‘The sin is yours and you know what you did.’ And the husband admitted then and there that he had had sexual intercourse with another woman.

Then the woman conducting *ho‘oponopono* explained that this was the sin that fell on the child and caused the rash. The wife forgave her husband, they both prayed and they cried. Now their relationship is beautiful.

And within a week’s time, the little boy’s rash was all cleared up.

*Nānā I Ke Kumu, NKK2 pp.140–41*

**Holi, Hūli, Holākā** (S/H/Pu) The Hindu spring festival, celebrated at the approach of the spring season (vernal equinox) over the ten – but particularly the three or four – days preceding the full moon of *Phālgun* (February/March);

believed to be a relic of ancient fertility rites, still retaining much of its ancient character. People sprinkle coloured water and throw brightly coloured powders (*gulāl*) at one another and at animals, and generally make merry – singing, beating drums, cymbals, and playing other musical instruments. *Holī* is also described as *Hutāshani* (fire-consuming), since it includes the lighting of bonfires on which all evils are symbolically burnt. *Holī* permits a relaxing and reversal of the strict traditional roles observed during the rest of the year.

According to traditional Hindu belief, *Holī* commemorates the frolics of the youthful Kṛishṇa and his *gopīs* (cowherds). The festival is also celebrated in honour of the triumph of Kṛishṇa over the female demoness, *Pūtānā*, and to commemorate the burning of the demoness, *Holikā*, daughter of *Hiraṇyakashipu*, and the destruction of the deity *Kāma* by *Shiva*.

Some mystics have used imagery derived from the *Holī* celebrations to describe mystical experiences. Mīrābāī writes:

A four-day wonder is the spring festival,  
it is your chance to play *Holī*, O my mind.  
Without cymbals, without drums,  
the unstruck Music comes resounding.  
Without any tune, without any sound,  
with no pause, the Melody resounds,  
filling every pore of my body.

I fill love's spray with the hue  
of virtue and contentment,  
and blissfully sprinkle this colour around.  
The colour scatters, the (inner) sky glows red,  
and unceasingly it rains its vivid and varied tints.

I have cast from me the veil of my body,  
I have shed all reserve and fear  
of what people may say.  
This is the *Holī* I play at this spring festival.

Mīrā adores her beloved Lord,  
she sacrifices her all at His lotus feet.

*Mīrābāī, Sudhā Sindhu, Horī ke pad 2, MSS p.893; cf. MDLS pp.145–46*

Swami Shiv Dayal Singh has also written a number of poems using the imagery of *Holī*. He says, for example:

The dwelling of *Rādhā Swāmī* is overflowing with colour:  
I play *Holī* with great enthusiasm.

I spray the water of *surat* and *nirat* at *Rādhā Swāmī*.  
 I make a vessel of the sun and the moon,  
 and fill it with the coloured powder (*gulāl*) of love.

The reservoir of *sukhman* is filled to capacity.  
 The fountain of the *bank nāl* soars to the height.  
 The fountain (of *sahans dal kanwal*)  
 dances with a thousand spouts.  
 It goes beyond *trikuṭī*,  
 and reaches the gate of *sunm*.  
 Now I am playing with pure souls (*hansas*),  
 and the current of immortal nectar flows.  
 The wonderful and unceasing Sound has become audible.  
 The name of *Rādhā Swāmī* is resounding magnificently.

Dear brothers! Play a Holī of this nature!  
 The saints will be well-pleased with it.

*Swami Shiv Dayal Singh, Sār Bachan Poetry 39:11.1–8, SBP p.361*

Here, the *surat* and *nirat* are the soul's faculties to hear and see within. The other terms are stages in the inner ascent of the soul.

**holy communion** See **Eucharist**.

**hom(a)** (S/H/Pu), **homa-yajña** (S), **hom yagya** (H), **hom yag** (Pu), **havan(a)** (S/H), **sbyin sreg** (T), **hù mó** (C), **goma** (J) *Lit.* fire ceremony (*homa*); fire ceremony (*homa*) sacrifice (*yajña*); the fire sacrifice; oblation to gods through the medium of fire; a ritual in which various substances, such as ghee, milk, rice and other things, are thrown into a fire, large or small, as an offering to the gods, accompanied by *mantras* – invocations, chantings, and prayers – which are varied according to the purpose of the *homa*. *Homa* is used synonymously with *havana*, both being derived from the Sanskrit root *hu* (to offer, to present, to make an offering to or in honour of a deity). *Havan* is generally used in North India, and *hom* in South India. *Havana* is also a name of *Agni*, the deity of fire.

*Homa* or *havana* is a ritual form of deity worship through the medium of sacred fire. Fire is regarded as a mediator between deities and men because it is believed that fire consumes the sacrifice and carries it to the deities in the form of smoke and aroma. *Homa* is performed to please the chosen deity so that various worldly desires or spiritual aspirations may be fulfilled.

Different *homas* or *havanas* exist for different purposes: *e.g.* house-warming; marriage; the thread ceremony; to obtain happiness, wealth and

power; to be protected from calamity and untimely death; to be purified of sin; and so on, details of how to perform the various rites being found in the *Vedas*. Included among the better-known *homas* are *mṛityuñjaya-homa* (to protect from life-threatening circumstances such as illness and accident), *Durgā-homa* (to overcome negative influences), *Chaṇḍi-homa* (for success in all endeavours), *Gāyatrī-homa* (to dispel ignorance and encourage positivity), *Gaṇapati-homa* (to overcome obstacles, to increase prosperity), *Mangala-saṃskaraṇa-homa* (to celebrate auspicious occasions, to attain liberation of the soul), and *Vishvashānti-homa* (to encourage universal peace and harmony). The length and procedure of a *homa* depends upon the purpose for which it is being performed.

Depending upon the purpose of the *homa*, stoves of different shapes and dimensions are used, with esoteric symbols engraved upon them. A clean place is selected for the ritual and a fire container or fire altar (*homa kuṇḍa*, *havana kuṇḍa*) is constructed out of brick, stone or metal, or is formed from a hole in the ground made to a specific shape and dimensions. The priests and the principal people performing the ceremony sit around the altar, with their families and other devotees forming a larger ring around them. After lighting the fire, Vedic *mantras* are chanted and offerings of items such as ghee (clarified butter), rice, herbs and other foodstuffs are made to the chosen deity. On conclusion of prayers, the participants are given *prasāda* (sanctified food), which marks the conclusion of *homa*.

Originating in Hindu and Vedic ritual, *homa* or *havana* is also practised in *Vajrayāna* (esoteric or tantric) Buddhism for purificatory purposes – to eliminate negative energies, thoughts, and desires. *Homa* rituals are found wherever esoteric Buddhism is practised, including China, Japan, Mongolia, Bali, and Tibet. In Tibet, a purificatory *homa* ceremony often follows a meditation retreat.

A tantric Buddhist text, the *Vairochana-abhisambodhi Sūtra*, which exists in both Tibetan and Chinese translations from the (now missing) Sanskrit, says that there are two fundamental kinds of *homa* – inner and outer, spiritual practice and external ritual. In accordance with the tantric tradition, both are deemed necessary:

There are two kinds of *homa*, namely, internal and external:  
Internal *homa* is so-called because it is able to burn off *karma*.  
By it, one obtains liberation from *karma* and rebirth. . . .

In its external form, there are three aspects  
(the practitioner, the hearth, and the deity),  
and each one of these is an integral part of the other.  
Following the path of these three  
constitutes the excellent external *homa*.

Whoever practises in any other way  
will not understand the practice of *homa*;  
Ignorant, he will obtain no results.

*Vairochana-abhisambodhi Sūtra* 5, T18 848:32c; cf. VSSG pp.130–31

Some schools of tantric Buddhism identify four kinds of *homa* (J. *shishu-goma*):

1. *Shāntika* (J. *sokusai*) *Lit.* propitiatory; to avert evil or calamity.
2. *Paushṭika* (J. *zōyaku*) *Lit.* concerning growth or welfare, nourishing, furthering; to increase blessings, material or spiritual.
3. *Vashīkaraṇa* (J. *kōai*) *Lit.* subjugating, bewitching by charms, spells, and incantation; to summon good beings.
4. *Abhichāraka* (J. *chōbuku*) *Lit.* exorcizing, enchanting, bewitching; to subjugate evil beings.

The practice of *homa* rituals in esoteric Buddhism provides an opportunity to observe how the same basic ritual is adapted to local cultural conditions. Indian ghee, for example, is substituted in Japan with sesame oil, while the use of two ladles and an initial offering to *Agni* are common ritual motifs.

According to *brāhmaṇ* belief, fire was understood to be the mouth of heaven, and it was believed that offerings made to fire would result in benefits being granted by heaven. According to the *Manu Smṛiti*,<sup>1</sup> five daily sacrifices are obligatory for every *brāhmaṇ*. These are *brahmayajña* (offerings to *Brahman* and the sages), *pitṛi-yajña* (offerings to ancestors), *deva-yajña* (offerings to deities), *bhūta-yajña* (offerings to all other beings, including spirits, animals, and birds), and *manushya-yajña* (offerings to human beings, entertaining guests, hospitality, *etc.*). Collectively they are known as *pañcha-mahāyajña* (five great sacrifices). Since it is difficult in modern times to perform the five sacrifices in the manner prescribed, a short cut has been devised which only requires the repetition of the *Gāyatrī Mantra* five times. It is believed that this is sufficient to provide the necessary spiritual sustenance to the deities, *Brahman* and the sages, ancestors, deities, spirits and other beings, and human beings.

In tantric Buddhism, fire is understood to symbolize wisdom, which burns away human impurity and illusion. In Japan, when the ceremony involves a physical fire, it is known as *goma* or *gegoma*; and the same ceremony when performed mentally is known as *naigoma*.

According to the *Tejobindu Upanishad*, the performance of *homa* – together with all other externals – is unreal when compared to the supreme and transcendental *Brahman*:

Ablutions, the uttering of *mantras*, austerities (*tapas*), fire sacrifice (*homa*), the study of the *Vedas*, worship of the *devas*, *mantra*, *tantra*,

association with the good, . . . whatever teachers declare to be true,  
whatever is seen in the world, whatever exists . . . – all these are unreal.

*Tejobindu Upanishad 5:52–58; cf. TMU p.74*

Later mystics have said the same:

Through burnt offerings (*hom*), charitable feasts (*jag*),  
ritualistic chants (*jap*), penance (*tap*),  
all sorts of austere self-discipline (*sanjam*)  
and pilgrimages (*tirath*) to sacred shrines and rivers –  
they do not find God.

Self-conceit is only erased  
when one seeks the Lord's sanctuary and becomes a *gurmukh*;  
O Nānak, (only) he crosses over the world-ocean.

*Guru Arjun, Ādi Granth 1139, AGK*

You have done no meditation,  
but have always kept yourself busy  
going to holy places, performing fire sacrifices (*hom*),  
recitation (*jap*), and good works (*dān*).

*Jagjīvan Sāhib, Bānī 2, Updesh kā ang, Shabd 2, JSB2 p.12*

See also: **yajña**.

1. *Manu Smṛiti* 3:70–72.

**hula, mele, oli** (Hw) *Lit.* chant (*hula, mele, oli*); a chant or song used to accompany dancing (*hula*); a chant, song, or anthem (*mele*); a chant without dancing (*oli*), especially with extended phrases chanted in one breath, often with a trill at the end of each phrase. Hawaiian religious chants may be as formal prayers spoken or sung out loud at important ceremonies.

Since the Hawaiian language was never written until the arrival of the Europeans, every chant or prayer had to be memorized. The missionaries' attempt to put the language on paper was fraught with problems. The letter 'T' was often written as a 'K'; the letter 'R' was also mistranslated into the letter 'L'. So the poetic language of the Hawaiians lost much of its flow. Then, in the 1900s, the native Hawaiian language was officially outlawed and people were forbidden to speak it. According to *Nānā I Ke Kumu* ('Look to the Source'), a primary source book of Hawaiian culture and beliefs:

Hawaii's formal prayers were composed, memorized, handed-down chants. For public ceremonies and in high *ali'i* circles, priests, clad

in the white *malo* (loincloth) of sacredness, prayed before *kuahu* and *heiau* (altar and place of worship). Ritual prayers were often accompanied by sacrifices to the gods, embellished by ritual, enhanced by the beat of the *pahu* (prayer drum), or given the ultimate solemnity of complete silence among the listeners.

*Nānā I Ke Kumu, NKK2 p.123*

Common, every day speech and also chants were poetic and used metaphors and similes to express things that were best left unsaid in a literal fashion:

These sacred chants made full use of personification, as:

Bend down, O heavens,  
listen, O earth.

Of poetic comparison:

Numerous as the *ko'oko'olau* blossoms  
yellowing in the sun;  
As the *hinahina* plant spreading on the beach.

Of allusion, as the same comparison continues (where the “redness” and “blood” allude to women’s blood in menstruation and childbirth, and the prayer is to induce pregnancy):

As the redness of the *'akoko* plant . . .  
the creeping *'akoko*, red as a clot of blood.

Of litany-like repetition:

*Kū* who makes echoes;  
*Kū* who shouts aloud;  
*Kū* who reveals in dreams. . . .

Of an oratorical repetition and balance of phrases:

*Mana* (power) . . . to brush aside darkness, brush aside death,  
brush aside trouble. . . .

And:

From the East and from the West,  
from the North and the South,

from zenith to horizon,  
from the upper strata and the lower strata.

Creative imagination went into composing the formal prayer, but before it was publicly chanted and incorporated into the folklore of prayer, each word must be scrutinized for a harmful inner meaning. This was a necessary precaution. It centred on the belief that the spoken word itself could call down blessing or create havoc.

*Nānā I Ke Kumu, NKK2 p.124*

Some prayers or chants were less formal. Mrs Pukui remembers her grandmother chanting to the volcano goddess *Pele* at both the rising and the setting of the sun. She says that Hawaiians honoured, begged, and cajoled their gods:

From Kahiki (Tahiti) came *Pele*,  
from the land of Bora Bora,  
from the smoky columns of *Kāne*.

And:

*Pele* is my goddess,  
a chiefess of sacred darkness,  
and of sacred light.

*Pele* is my goddess,  
quiet reigns in the heavens,  
and reigns over the earth.

The ‘flowers of speech’ sent daily to *Pele* were most suitable. For in co-author Pukui’s family line, *Pele* was both *akua* (god) and ‘*aumakua* (spiritual ancestor or ancestor god). In the chants, her earthly descendants praised *Pele* and also recited the legendary history of her migration from an ‘ancient land’ to the island of Hawaii.

*Nānā I Ke Kumu, NKK2 p.126*

See also: **pule** (8.5).

**hymn** (Gk. *hymnos*, L. *hymnus*) A religious or spiritual song; a song of praise or worship; from the Greek *hymnos* (‘song of praise’), a song sung in honour of deities, heroes, or famous men. The composition and singing of hymns is known as ‘hymnody’.

Songs of praise to a supreme divine power or to lesser deities have probably existed in all cultures. They are present among the earliest-known human



literature, as evidenced in texts preserved from ancient Egypt, the Indus Valley, and the Sumerian civilization of ancient Mesopotamia, dating back to the fourth and fifth millennia BCE. Music and singing are natural forms of human expression, and it seems inevitable that those of a religious, spiritual or devotional bent of mind would express themselves in this manner.

Among the most ancient hymns are: the *Great Hymn to the Aten* by the Egyptian Pharaoh Akhenaten (*d.c.* 1336 BCE); the Hurrian (Anatolia and Northern Mesopotamia) *Hymn to Nikkal* (*c.* 1400 BCE); the thirty-three *Homeric Hymns* (*c.* 7th–6th BCE) of ancient Greece, in praise of the Greek deities; the hymns of the Hindu *Vedas* (*c.* 1700–1100 BCE) in praise of the Vedic gods; and the Jewish *Psalms*, written by a variety of authors over an extended period of time that is very difficult to determine. Estimates range from 1400–450 BCE, much depending upon whether ‘historical’ pointers in the text are understood literally or are analysed more critically.

In Christianity, a hymn is a song of praise, devotion or worship, the early compositions of which are generally regarded as an extension of the biblical psalms, written in Hebrew. The earliest-known Christian hymn, dating from around 200 CE, is the Greek *Phōs hilaron* (‘Go, Gladsome Light’), translated into English by the American poet, Henry Longfellow (1807–1882).

The development of ‘orthodox’ Christian hymnody grew after the legalization of Christianity by the Emperor Constantine in 313. Its earliest flourishing was probably in Syria, the home of Ephraim Syrus (306–373), the author of a large number of hymns. Prior to this time, however, there is significant evidence of hymns of praise and devotion being penned by the gnostics, Mandaean, and Manichaeans. Collections of devotional songs such as the *Odes of Solomon*, dated roughly to the second century, indicate that the composition of songs of praise and devotion was always ongoing.

Over the centuries, various forms of hymn and hymn singing have been devised. Congregational singing in early Christian communities was established in the fourth century, but was gradually supplanted until by the Middle Ages hymns were sung only by the priest and trained choirs, in Latin, a language that was not understood by the common people. Congregational singing was only re-established during the Reformation (1517–1648) by the Lutheran Church in Germany, using hymns written in German. Martin Luther (1483–1546) himself wrote around forty hymns.

English hymnody lagged behind the German Protestant movement, but received a significant boost from the Congregationalist hymn writer Isaac Watts, who composed something in the region of 750 hymns. His first collection, *Hymns and Spiritual Songs*, was published in 1707, many of which are favourites that are still sung in churches to this day. Later in the same century, hymnody was finally established in England and America through the influence of John and Charles Wesley and their mid-eighteenth century, cross-denominational evangelical Protestant movement. Even so, the singing of hymns in church was only officially accepted by the Church of England in

1820, after the issue had come to a head following unofficial hymn singing at a church in Sheffield.

**ibahú** (AC) The shrub that produces the small, black fruit that makes a rattling sound inside the Guaraní ritual rattle (*mbaraká*). The Avá-Chiripá of South America believe that the archetype of the *ibahú* exists in paradise (*oka-vusú*).<sup>1</sup> See **mbaraká**.

1. Miguel Bartolomé, "Shamanism Among the Avá-Chiripá," *SAC* p.123.

**ʿīd** (A/P) *Lit.* feast, festival; a festival day or holy day, such as *ʿĪd al-Fiṭr* (festival of breaking fast), held on the new moon that signals the end of the month of *Ramaḍān*, the ninth lunar month in the Islamic calendar.

The most significant festival in the Muslim calendar is *ʿĪd al-Aḍḥá* (festival of the sacrifice), when an animal is sacrificed after communal prayer. *ʿĪd al-Aḍḥá* is generally believed to have been instituted in commemoration of Abraham's (Ibrāhīm) willingness to obey God's command to sacrifice his son, which was commuted by God at the last minute to a ram (conveniently caught in a thorny bush near the site of sacrifice). According to Muslim tradition the place of Abraham's sacrifice was Minā, outside Mecca. The pillars at Minā, which are stoned by pilgrims during the *ḥajj*, symbolize the devil's attempts to tempt Abraham to abandon the sacrifice. In the biblical story,<sup>1</sup> the son is Isaac, but the Quranic version of the story leaves the son unnamed,<sup>2</sup> and Muslim tradition maintains that the son was Ishmael (Ismāʿīl), who is believed to have been the forefather of the desert Arabs and of Muḥammad.

The story of Abraham's sacrifice represents God's test of his obedience to the divine will. *ʿĪd al-Aḍḥá* is the culminating rite of a *ḥajj*, performed on the tenth of the month of *Dhū al-Ḥijjah*. Every Muslim is expected to offer some animal for sacrifice – a camel, cow, goat or sheep, according to his means.

In Sufi poetry, it is generally said that the joy of these two main festivals is experienced every day by the lovers of God, who meet their beloved daily. The "eyebrows" signify the beauty of the divine beloved:

If others celebrate this ʿīd (festival) tomorrow,  
we have ours now:

Those who fast, see the new moon,  
but we the beloved's eyebrows.

*Saʿdī, Ṭayyibāt 82:5, KSSS p.261; cf. TOS p.117*

The divine beloved is also compared directly to the ʿīd, to whom the lover sacrifices his ego. When the beloved appears within, the self of the lover is annihilated:

O my auspicious ‘īd (i.e. beloved),  
 if you should return according to your promise,  
 I would be mean indeed if I did not sacrifice myself to you.

*Sa‘dī, Ṭayyibāt 58:4, KSSS p.255; cf. TOS pp.81–82*

In a similar vein, Imāmī of Harāt (d.c. 1268) maintains that the sight of his master makes every moment a festival for him:

We celebrate the ‘īd for just one day in all the year:  
 but the sight of you, for me, is a never-ending ‘īd.<sup>3</sup>

*Imāmī of Harāt, DIIM fol.98a; cf. in LPB3 pp.116–17*

See also: **ḥajj**, **Ramaḍān**.

1. *Genesis* 22:1–14.
2. *Qur’ān* 37:99ff.
3. This part of *DIIM* (British Museum Ms. Or. 1847) may actually be from the *Diwan-i Qaṭrān*; see Hādī Hasan, *Falakī-i-Shirwānī*, *FSSH* p.93 (n.3).

**iḥrām** (A/P) *Lit.* prohibition; consecration; the sacred dress of Muslim pilgrims; the state of ritual purity entered by a Muslim in order to perform the *ḥajj* (greater pilgrimage) or *‘umrah* (lesser pilgrimage); also, the state of a worshipper during the ritual prayer (*ṣalāh*), held five times daily.

When performing *ḥajj* or *‘umrah*, pilgrims stop at various designated places on the approach to Mecca in order to carry out ritual cleansing ceremonies. A man shaves his head, trims his beard and cuts his nails before donning a white, seamless two-piece garment, traditionally made of cotton, linen or wool, and known either as the *iḥrām* garment or just as the *iḥrām*. One piece of the garment is wrapped around the loins, and the other is thrown over the shoulders. Although no traditional dress is prescribed for women, they wear long white robes. During the period of *iḥrām*, sexual activity, shaving, and cutting one’s hair and nails are all forbidden.

Various other prohibitions exist when the pilgrim is in a state of *iḥrām*. These include not only an injunction against hunting, but also against causing harm to animals or insects, or even uprooting plants. The basic idea is to restrain all aggressive tendencies, and to be in a peaceful state of mind. Hence, even thinking about worldly matters is regarded as taboo. Some commentators have suggested that the whiteness of the *iḥrām* garment carries the association of a shroud, symbolizing that the pilgrim has become dead to all worldly desires and ambitions, and is living a purely spiritual life.<sup>1</sup>

In Sufi literature, *iḥrām* refers to the inner purity that is necessary for the spiritual journey. Ni‘mat Allāh Valī says:

The outer *iḥrām* is well-known, whereas the inner one involves the binding of the spiritual loincloth and cloak around one who has been inwardly consecrated after detachment from the characteristics of the *nafs* (lower mind) and from satanic, depraved practices; whose inner being has been purged of repugnant, immoral attitudes, and whose heart has been cleansed of blameworthy and lustful traits.

*Shāh Nī'mat Allāh Valī, Rasā'il, RNV1 p.44, in SSE3 p.112*

Speaking symbolically of the change of garments on entering the state of *iḥrām*, he also says:

The pilgrimage (*ḥajj*) is obligatory for one “who can afford the journey”.<sup>2</sup> The realization of the pilgrimage (*ḥajj*) however, arises from one's devoted attention to the guidance and favour of God when one sets out, without expectations, from the province of existence (*ḥastī*) into the desert of nonexistence (*nīstī*). Reaching the site where the *iḥrām* is donned, one removes the flimsy garb of the flesh, the vesture of mankind from the self, and puts on the *iḥrām* of detachment from the world and the self, just as Abraham did.

*Shāh Nī'mat Allāh Valī, Rasā'il, RNV1 p.181; cf. in SSE3 p.107*

Najm al-Dīn Rāzī similarly ascribes a symbolic meaning to the various rites and places associated with a *ḥajj*: “The pilgrimage (*ḥajj*) symbolizes return to the Almighty Presence, informing one of the attainment of union with God.” Continuing, he explains a verse from the *Qur'ān* as if God Himself were the speaker:

When you have reached that place of consecration, which is the heart, perform a total ablution with the water of repentance. Divest yourself of the garment of the human state, and clothe yourself in the *iḥrām* of service to Us. Cry out, “*Labbayka* (I answer Your call)” in love; ascend the ‘Arafāt of gnosis; climb the Mount of Mercy (Jabal al-Raḥmah, the mountain dominating the valley of ‘Arafāt) of Our grace; and place your foot in the enclosed shrine of Our nearness. Stand firm at the sacred waymark (Mash‘ar al-Ḥarām, a roofless mosque at Muzdalifah) of servitude to Us. Proceed to the Minā of the death of desire; sacrifice, at that place of slaughter, the beast that is your carnal soul (*nafs-i bahīmī*, lower mind). And then turn to the *Ka'bah* of Our union: “Leave yourself and come.”<sup>3</sup>

*Najm al-Dīn Rāzī, Mirṣād al-'Ibād, MIMM p.171; cf. PGBO pp.187–88*

See also: **ḥajj**.

1. E.g. 'Alī Sharī'atī, *Hajj*, HASS pp.17–18.
2. *Qur'ān* 3:97, AYA.
3. Part of a saying attributed to Bāyazīd.

**‘ilm al-ḥurūf** (A), **‘ilm-i ḥurūf** (P) *Lit.* the science (‘ilm) of letters (*ḥurūf*); the Arabic equivalent of the Jewish *gematria*, in which the ascribed numerical value of the letters of a word are added together. This is then compared in various ways to the value of other words in order to find hidden meanings or associations. For example, the numerical value of the sum of the letters comprising both *Ādam wa-Ḥawwā’* (Adam and Eve) and *Allāh* is 66. Likewise, the value of *al-ḥikmat al-ilāhīyah* (divine wisdom) and *taṣawwuf* (Sufism) are the same. As with similar forms of divination, such as tarot cards, the Chinese *Yijing*, astrology and the like, these connections are regarded by some as significant.

See also: **gematria**.

**immaculate conception** The Christian belief that Mary the mother of Jesus was conceived without any stain of the sin of Adam, usually referred to as original sin. Various Old and New Testament texts<sup>1</sup> have been cited in support (rather than proof) of the doctrine, which arose in the early Church from a general belief in Mary’s holiness, and the feeling that she who gave birth to Jesus could not have been touched by sin.

Debate concerning the precise nature of her sanctity continued over the centuries. In medieval times, some, especially the thirteenth-century Thomas Aquinas, argued that the doctrine of the universal redemption offered by Jesus should not be undermined by special cases. Others, such as the Franciscan, John Duns Scotus, maintained that Mary (by the special grace of God, rather than from any special merit on her part) was the recipient of special sanctifying grace, which preserved her from all stain of sin, resulting in a more perfect redemption than is granted to others. Gradually, the latter view became the accepted belief, advanced by several popes, although it was not until 1854 that Pope Pius IX, urged on by a majority of Catholic bishops worldwide, issued a papal bull declaring the doctrine to have been revealed by God, and as such to be regarded as an item of belief for all Catholics.<sup>2</sup>

According to this doctrine, the conception of Mary happened in the normal manner. But since, according to Christian belief, a “person is truly conceived when the soul is created and infused into the body, Mary was preserved exempt from all stain of original sin at the first moment of her animation, and sanctifying grace was given to her before sin could have taken effect in her soul”.<sup>3</sup>

See also: **virgin birth**.

1. *Genesis* 3:15; *Luke* 1:28.
2. See “Immaculate Conception,” *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 2001.
3. See “Immaculate Conception,” *Catholic Encyclopedia*, 1910.

**Isrāʾ, al-** (A/P) *Lit.* travelling by night; the Night Journey of Muḥammad, mentioned in the *Qurʾān*, from “the inviolable place of worship (*al-masjid al-ḥarām*)” in Mecca to “the far distant place of worship (*al-masjid al-aqṣá*)”<sup>1</sup> in Jerusalem, before his ascent (*miʾrāj*) through the seven heavens into the presence of God. In Sufism, the inner mystical journey. Thus, Ibn al-Fāriḍ speaks of, “my inmost self’s night journey (*isrāʾ*) to myself”.<sup>2</sup>

Jerusalem is a common metaphor in Jewish and Christian writings for the heavenly realms. It is possible therefore that the journey between the two *masjids* symbolizes the ‘journey’ in darkness, while the soul is still captive in the body, to the threshold of the heavenly realms, from where the real spiritual ascent begins.

See also: **miʾrāj**.

1. *Qurʾān* 17:1, *MGK*.
2. Ibn al-Fāriḍ, *Dīwān*, *Tāʾrīyah* 454, *DFQM* p.89, in *SIM* p.239.

**Israel** (He) *Lit.* he who has struggled with God; the name given by an angel – a messenger of God – to the Jewish patriarch Jacob after he had wrestled all night with the angel and overcome him.

According to *Genesis*, the angel says: “Your name shall no longer be called Yaʾakov (Jacob), but Israel; for you have contended with God and with men, and have prevailed.”<sup>1</sup> The epithet is of uncertain derivation, although it is probably a compilation of the verb *sara* (to struggle) and the noun *El*, which is the common abbreviation of *Elohim*, a name for God. The first part of the name could also be derived from the word *sar*, in which case ‘Israel’ would mean ‘prince of God’. Understood symbolically, as many biblical stories were intended to be, the meaning would be that Jacob had vanquished all the human obstacles between himself and realization of the Divine.

The medieval Jewish teacher Baḥya ben Asher (1255–1340) of Zaragoza in Spain described four categories of biblical interpretation: *peshat* (literal), the plain meaning of the text; *midrash* (narrative, legendary); logical and philosophical; and kabbalistic, which he called ‘the path of light’, and which he felt was the only way to understand the deep mysteries of the *Torah*. He commented that while it is true that the *Torah* uses the names Jacob (Yaʾakov) and Israel interchangeably,

from a more rational or scientific point of view we may detect a distinct pattern in the *Torah*, sometimes choosing to refer to Ya‘akov by his original name and sometimes by his additional name (Israel). The name Ya‘akov applies to the physical part of Ya‘akov’s personality, matters connected to his terrestrial existence, whereas the name Israel refers to spiritual aspects of his personality, matters connected to his eternal existence in celestial regions.

*Bahya ben Asher, Midrash Rabbeinu Bahya, TCA2 p.683*

Rabbi Bahya does not reveal the kabbalistic sources upon which he was basing his mystical interpretation. However, a similar interpretation is provided by the renowned Jewish scholar and mystic, Moses Nahmanides (1194–1270). He proposes that ‘Ya‘akov’ suggests deviousness, deriving the name from ‘akov (crooked); and that ‘Israel’ suggests integrity and straightforwardness, deriving the name from *yashar* (straight) and *El* (God) – meaning he who walks straight with God.<sup>2</sup> Louis Ginzberg, in his monumental work, *Legends of the Jews*, offers several additional explanations for the name ‘Israel’, including “the man who saw God (*ish ra’ah El*).”<sup>3</sup> Expanding on this meaning, the first-century Greek-speaking, Jewish philosopher Philo Judaeus of Alexandria (c.25 BCE – 50 CE) lists ‘Israel’ as one of a number of names for the *Logos*; since the *Logos* is the Firstborn and creative power of the Divine, and in that ‘capacity’ is able to ‘see’ God:

If a man should not be worthy to be called a son of God, let him strive manfully to take his place under God’s Firstborn, the *Logos*, the eldest of the angels, who is as it were their chief. And many names are his; for he is called Beginning (*Archē*), and Name of God, and *Logos*, and the Man-after-the-Likeness, and ‘he that sees’ – that is ‘Israel’.

*Philo Judaeus, On the Confusion of Tongues 28; cf. PCW4 pp.88–91, TGH1 p.234*

1. Genesis 32:28.
2. Moses Nahmanides, *Derasha, DNAJ*, in *LJLG* p.308 (n.253).
3. Louis Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews*, *LJLG* p.307 (n.253).

**istikhārah** (A), **istikhārat** (P) *Lit.* seeking a blessing; consulting a book or counting beads in order to make a decision; seeking a good omen; asking for the best choice; seeking good guidance; seeking guidance from God when faced with a decision.

A variety of practices are used as aids when seeking guidance. Sometimes, a person repeats a round of prayer just before going to sleep. The answer may then come in a dream, a sign, or in some sudden awareness of what to do. Sometimes, though this practice is not encouraged by Muslim authorities, after a round of prayer, the *Qur’ān* is opened and the hand is placed upon

any page, at random. The verse under or beside the hand may then be used to provide guidance. The same practice is performed, particularly in *Shī'ah* countries, with Rūmī's *Maśnavī*.

Hujwīrī explains:

'To ask blessing' means 'to commit all one's affairs to God and to be saved from the various sorts of contamination'. The Prophet used to teach his followers to ask a blessing (*istikhārat*), just as he taught them the *Qur'ān*. When a man recognizes that his welfare does not depend on his own effort and foresight, but that every good and evil that happens to him is decreed by God, who knows best what is salutary for him, he cannot do otherwise than surrender himself to destiny and implore God to deliver him from the wickedness of his own mind (*nafs*).

*Hujwīrī, Kashf al-Mahjūb, Introduction, KMM pp.2–3; cf. KM p.9*

**ī'tikāf** (A/P) *Lit.* devotional retreat, solitary retreat; seclusion from people and the world for the purposes of devotion and spiritual practice, especially in a place such as a mosque or Sufi monastery (*khānaqāh*); also called a *khalwah*; a period of devotion to God during the last ten days of the month, especially *Ramaḍān* (the month of fasting during the daylight hours), when many Muslims go to the mosque for extended periods of prayer and devotion; in Sufism, an extended retreat for meditational purposes, stressed more by some Sufi orders than others; inspired by the example of Muḥammad, who is said to have practised long periods of seclusion; similar to the practice of spending all or part of the night in prayer or meditation (*tahajjud*).

Jurjānī defines *ī'tikāf*:

Devotional retreat (*ī'tikāf*) involves emptying the heart of worldly preoccupations, and consigning oneself to God.

*Jurjānī, Ta'rīfāt, K TJ p.34, in SSE7 p.9*

Likewise, Bābā Ṭāhir Hamadānī:

Just as outer devotional retreat (*ī'tikāf*) in the mosque (as the figurative house of God) requires freedom from whatever distracts one from God, so inner devotional retreat (*ī'tikāf*) in the house of the heart, the true house of God, requires that the heart be emptied of whatever impedes attention to God. . . .

The reality of devotional retreat (*ī'tikāf*) is to maintain presence of heart, with the purest aspiration, through the witnessing of God, with God and for God, with no consciousness of gaining heavenly merit or fearing infernal punishment. . . .



Devotional retreat (*i'tikāf*) involves focusing the heart's attention on the reality of inward and outward meditation.

*Bābā Ṭāhir Hamadānī* 286, 284–85, in *SKQ* pp.603, 601, 602, in *FN17* p.14, in *SSE7* p.9

See also: **khalwah**.

**janeo, janeū** (H/Pu) *Lit.* the sacred thread; also, the Hindu thread ceremony itself. See **upanayana**.

**jaṭā** (S/Pa/H/Pu) *Lit.* tangled braids of hair, twisted locks of hair, matted hair; the long matted hair worn as an outward symbol of renunciation and asceticism among some groups of Indian *sādhus*; hence, *jaṭila* or *jaṭi* (one with matted hair), not to be confused with *jaṭī* (H/Pu., S. *yati*, one who strives), which is an ancient term for an ascetic or spiritual seeker.

Long matted hair from which flow the waters of the sacred Ganges is a characteristic of the deity *Shiva*. As the first yogi or ascetic, he is commonly portrayed in Indian devotional literature and art with matted hair, together with a tiger skin, a third eye open on his forehead, and other symbols.

The custom among ascetics of wearing the hair in twisted, matted braids is an ancient one. In the *Rāmāyaṇa*, when Rāma is preparing to go into exile with his brother Lakshmaṇa, he turns to King Guha and says:

“Guha, it does not seem proper to me to live in a forest inhabited by men. I should now live in a hermitage and should be properly dressed for that. I shall repair to the forest like an ascetic with Sītā and Lakshmaṇa. Please bring me the gum of a banyan tree for producing the matted hair (*jaṭā*) of an ascetic.”

Then the banyan gum was brought. The two brothers then matted their locks and put on bark garments, whereupon they looked like two *rishis*.

*Rāmāyaṇa*, *Ayodhyā Kāṇḍa* 2:52.66–70, *SVR1* p.428, *RVMV* (21) p.104

Though regarded by some as essential to the ascetic life, mystics have generally observed that such external signs do not of themselves lead to spirituality. The *Maitrī Upanishad*, observing that a teacher is required for one in search of divine knowledge (*jñāna*), distinguishes between those who are “worthy of heaven” and those who are not. Among the unworthy ones, it enumerates, “rogues, wearers of matted locks (*jaṭā*), dancers, mercenaries, religious mendicants, actors, those who have been corrupted in the service of kings, and the like”.<sup>1</sup> In the *Dhammapada*, the Buddha observes:

Neither wandering naked, nor matted hair (*jaṭā*),  
 nor (smearing the body with) mud, nor fasting,  
 nor sleeping on bare ground, nor dust (remaining unwashed),  
 nor (rubbing the body with) ashes,  
 nor squatting motionless on one's heels,  
 can purify a mortal who has not overcome his doubts.

*Dhammapada 10:13*

Neither by matted hair (*jaṭā*), nor by family or birth,  
 does one become a (true) *brāhmaṇ*.  
 In whoever there is truth and goodness –  
 he is blessed, he is a *brāhmaṇ*.

What is the use of matted hair (*jaṭā*), O witless man?  
 What use your antelope-skin garment?  
 The inside is an impenetrable jungle,  
 while you adorn the outer.

*Dhammapada 26:11–12*

Similarly, in the *Sutta Nipāta*:

Neither flesh nor fish, nor fasting,  
 nakedness, a shaven head, matted hair (*jaṭā*), nor sweat –  
 Neither rough-skin garb, nor solemn celebration of sacrificial fire,  
 nor the rigorous penance of those who seek immortality;  
 Neither hymns, oblations, rites, nor the seasonal festivals,  
 will cleanse a man whose doubt is not yet overcome.

*Sutta Nipāta, Āmagandha Sutta 2:2, PTSN p.44; cf. in TDKD p.108*

Many centuries later, Guru Amardās says the same:

One may take off clothes and become naked (*digambar*, 'sky-clad');  
 By wearing matted hair (*jaṭā*), how can *yoga* be practised?  
 What does it avail to hold the breath within the tenth gate (*daswai duār*),  
 if the mind is not pure?  
 The foolish person wanders and wanders,  
 and enters into transmigration again and again.

*Guru Amardās, Ādi Granth 1169, AGC*

And likewise, Dariyā Sāhib:

Leading a renunciate's life, putting on sandalwood marks,  
 and telling rosaries are all marks of beggary.

Those who grow matted hair (*jaṭā*)  
 and wrap themselves with tiger skin are also ill-directed.  
 Some completely shave their heads,  
 and renounce their households and wives,  
 but under the sway of the mind they do not discard hypocrisy.  
 Thus do they carry a heavy karmic load upon their heads.

*Dariyā Sāhib, Shabd 10:8, DG1 p.116; cf. DSSK p.369*

Some make a display of matted hair (*jaṭā*) upon their heads  
 by tangling their hair,  
 and some stitch heavy rags to make their robes.  
 Some besmear their bodies with ash and put on the tiger skin,  
 while some hang themselves upside down, tying their legs.  
 Some adorn their ears with heavy earrings,  
 and extend their breaths, practising breath-control.  
 In vain, do they all live without a *satguru*,  
 thus does Dariyā proclaim in this verse.

*Dariyā Sāhib, Shabd 2:24, DG1 p.67; cf. DSSK p.370*

See also: **jaṭi** (7.1), **shikhā**, **upanayana**.

1. *Maitrī Upanishad* 7:8.

**jazā'** (A), **jazā** (P) *Lit.* ransom, reward, recompense, compensation; used throughout the *Qur'ān* for compensation and ransom in a mundane sense,<sup>1</sup> for the reward of paradise promised to believers and the recompense of hellfire awaiting unbelievers,<sup>2</sup> and for compensation payable for infringement of religious law, such as hunting and killing an animal within the sacred precincts of Mecca or Madīnah or when in pilgrim's garb.<sup>3</sup>

The *Qur'ān* graphically portrays the reward awaiting the righteous and the unrighteous:

Truly hell lies in ambush, a home for transgressors. And they will dwell therein for ages. Nothing cool shall they taste therein, nor any drink, save a boiling fluid, and a fluid, dark, murky, and intensely cold – a fitting recompense (*jazā'*). For they looked not to any reckoning, and impudently denied our revelations. But all the things they did have We preserved on record. “So taste this,” We shall say, “You will have nothing but increasing torment.”

As for the righteous, they shall surely triumph. Theirs shall be gardens enclosed, and vineyards, and maidens as companions: a truly overflowing cup. There shall they hear no idle talk, nor any

falsehood – recompense (*jazā'*) from your Lord, an amply sufficient gift.

*Qur'ān 78:21–36; cf. AYA, KPA, MGK*

Sufis have broadly agreed with this principle:

Because the next world is an abode of recompense (*jazā'*), . . . wretchedness and felicity become manifest there.

*Ibn al-'Arabī, Meccan Revelations 3:382.34, FMIA6 (4:369) p.131, SPK p.150*

Rūmī explains, however, that just as human qualities, good or bad, are under one's control in this world, so too is the appropriate recompense in the next:

Just as a praiseworthy quality  
 is obedient to your command in this world,  
 likewise those rivers in the next world also flow at your command.  
 Those trees in paradise are obedient to you,  
 because those trees are made fruitful by your good qualities.  
 Since these qualities are obedient to your command here,  
 so your recompense (*jazā'*) is at your command there.  
 When blows proceeded from your hand against the victim of injustice,  
 they became a tree in hell. . . .  
 When you throw anger into people's hearts,  
 you become the source of hellfire.

*Rūmī, Maṣnavī III:3468–72; cf. MJR4 p.195*

In one of his discourses, Rūmī answers a question on the subject:

Someone asked, “Can any of the eternal judgments God has decreed be changed at all?”

That which God has decreed from all eternity, ill for ill and good for good, can never change because God is the decreer. Who would say: do something evil in order to procure something good? Does anyone ever plant wheat and reap barley, or plant barley and reap wheat? It is not possible. All the saints and prophets have said that the recompense (*jazā'*) for good is good, and the recompense (*jazā'*) for evil is evil. “Whoever has done an atom's weight of good shall see it, and whoever has done an atom's weight of evil shall see it.”<sup>4</sup>

If by eternal decree you mean what we have been saying and explaining, that will never change. God forbid! But if you want the recompense (*jazā'*) for good and evil to increase and thereby be changed, such that the more good you do, the more the recompense

(*jazā*) for good there will be, and the more injustice you do, the more retribution (*jazā*) for evil there will be – that much can change. But the basis of the decree will not.

*Rūmī, Fīhi mā Fīhi 15, KFF p.67; cf. DRA p.78, SOU p.70*

Rūmī also observes that when it comes to prayer or spiritual practice, God is the prime mover in all respects:

Both the prayer and its answer are from You.  
First, You give the desire for prayer,  
and lastly, You likewise give the recompense (*jazā*) for prayers.  
You are the First and the Last: we between are nothing.

*Rūmī, Maṣnavī IV:3499–3501; cf. MJR4 pp.464–65*

See also: **fidyah**, **thawāb**.

1. *E.g. Qur'ān 42:40.*
2. *E.g. Qur'ān 2:85, 3:136, 5:85, passim.*
3. *E.g. Qur'ān 5:94–96.*
4. *Qur'ān 99:7–8.*

**jiào** (C) *Lit.* to perform a sacrifice; a Daoist sacrificial ceremony, religious service, or ritual offering; in present times, a major Daoist ceremony, mostly organized by a local community. Such ceremonies may be performed regularly every few years (three, five or more, according to local custom) to invoke renewal of life and other blessings for the community (*xiè'ēn qī'ān jiào*, 'offering of thanksgiving and praying for peace'), or as a rite (*rángzāijiào*, 'offering for averting calamities') in response to an immediate problem, such as an epidemic or a drought.

In ancient China, the term *jiào* described licentious rituals (*yínsì*) and bloody sacrifices (*xuěshí*) performed by popular cults. From the second century CE, with the founding and growth of the *Tiānshī* school of Daoism, early communal liturgies became focused on repentance and purification, and were referred to as *zhāi* (fast, retreat). From around the seventh century, large-scale offerings known as *zhāijiào* became part of the ceremonial practices of the *Língbǎo* ('Sacred Jewel') school of Daoism. These offerings – intended to convey thanks to the spirits and deities for responding to petitions – included dates, cakes, fresh fruit, and the like.

From around the early eleventh century, the *zhāi* ritual (comprising purification and abstinence rites) came to be followed by the *jiào* ritual, which

consisted of offerings to support the *zhāi* petitions to the gods in anticipation of a favourable response.

A *jiào* ritual is usually performed over a three-day period, with some elements performed behind closed doors inside the temple by priests with a minimal audience, while processions, music and mass offerings are publicly performed in front of the temple.

See also: **zhāi**.

**jiè** (C) *Lit.* discipline, precept. There are two Chinese characters with overlapping meanings that are both rendered as *jiè*. Firstly, discipline: to guard against, to admonish or warn, to give up doing something, monastic discipline (*jiè*). Secondly, precept or commandment: to prohibit, a rule (of personal conduct) (*jiè*).

### *Jiè as Discipline*

Discipline for the Daoist means developing appropriate behaviour, involving self-control through persistent practice. A Daoist genuinely wishing to recover his original nature (*yuánxìng*, *běnxìng*) and attain union with the *Dào* needs to exercise strict self-discipline.

The contemporary writer Livia Kohn articulates the importance of discipline in Daoist practice:

Discipline serves to ensure the proper determination toward the *Dào*. It is the foundation that sets up the basic framework of mind and body, in which alone the hard work of the path can be accomplished. Discipline means commitment. It means surrender to the *Dào*, to the scriptures, to the teaching.

Discipline appears in several concrete forms – moral uprightness, formal procedures, physical restrictions, and examinations. The key to successful discipline is the development of a strong will toward the *Dào* and to secure its protection. By submitting to discipline, one proves one's readiness to undergo whatever is necessary to walk on the path and find one's place among the celestials.

*Livia Kohn, Taoist Experience, TEAK p.95*

Discussing the cultivation of purity, master Sūn Bù'èr (C12th) says that it is necessary to “maintain small discipline to arrive at great discipline”, suggesting that Daoists should pace themselves as they exercise self-discipline.<sup>1</sup> She goes on to say that, with stability, one develops clarity, and with clarity, one understands the *Dào*. She then follows this advice with a poem that includes the lines:

Through discipline (*jiè*) and concentration (*dīng*),  
 we can then attain a superior state of existence;  
 With spiritual body (*shēn*) attained,  
 we then realize the unparalleled *Dào*.

*Yùqīng tāiyuán nèiyǎng zhēnjīng,*  
*in Sūn Bù'èr yuánjūn chuánshù dāndào mìshū, ZW371, JY204*

Master Liú Yīmíng (1734–1821) says that discipline, stillness and wisdom are all necessary to arrive at the purity required for effective spiritual practice. Students who develop these three virtues will attain their goal, and realize their “one (inherent) nature (*yīxìng*)”:

To be disciplined (*jiè*) is to obliterate passions in every situation, and remain unattached to anything. To be still (*dīng*) is to be absolutely truthful, free of delusion, immovable, and unshakable. To be wise (*huì*) is to adapt and be flexible in everything, while remaining impartial and detached. To be disciplined (*jiè*), still (*dīng*) and wise (*huì*) are the three prerequisites for returning from artificiality to inherent naturalness (*zìrán*), for merging into and becoming the one (inherent) nature (*yīxìng*) – for returning to the state of purity and clarity that is undifferentiating and non-discriminating.

*Liú Yīmíng, Wùzhēn zhízhǐ, ZW253, DS17*

Since collecting the mind is a difficult process, requiring great discipline, sincere and determined effort is required. Failures along the way should not become a cause of discouragement:

The human mind has been impulsive and competitive for a very long time. It is very difficult to control the mind by discipline (*jiè*). You may calm it, but not be able to maintain the calm – possessing it briefly, but losing it again – struggling in the gain and loss, sweating in the fight, winning and losing battles. But after a long time, the mind becomes soft and tame. Do not give up the work of a lifetime just because there are no results for the time being.

*Yáng Dàoshēng, Zhēnquán, JY244, ZW373*

Only continual, persistent discipline leads to the attainment of progressively higher levels of awareness. When Confucius (*Kǒngfūzǐ*) reputedly asked Lǎozǐ to tell him how to attain the perfect *Dào*, Lǎozǐ responded:

Purge your heart by fasting and discipline (*jiè*). . . . Wash your pure spirit (*jīngshén*) as white as snow. Discard your knowledge.

*Zhuāngzǐ 22; cf. CTT p.213*

In his commentary (*zhù*) on the *Yijing*, an ancient Chinese divination text, master Liú Yīmíng explains the hexagram on ‘discipline’<sup>2</sup> to mean that discipline should not be practised unthinkingly, regardless of circumstances:

Although discipline (*jié*) may help progress, if you do not know how to adapt to changes and adapt to situations, and insist on a single set of rules, you will in fact be bound by that discipline (*jié*). This is called harsh discipline (*jié*). When discipline (*jié*) becomes austere, it causes unnecessary danger – only hardship and harm with no benefit. Not only does it not enable discipline (*jié*), it also causes the loss of discipline (*jié*). . . .

Uprightness is attained by being soft and yielding. If you diminish firmness to increase softness, discipline (*jié*) is then naturally attained. This is called the discipline (*jié*) of calm and peace. When discipline (*jié*) is peaceful, it comes naturally – not by force.

*Liú Yīmíng, Zhōuyì (60) chǎnzhēn, ZW245, DS13*

### ***Jiè as Precept or Commandment***

Various sets of precepts have been formulated by Daoist schools, often based on technical terms and key phrases from the *Dàodé jīng* (c.C3rd BCE). Different precepts were formulated for the laity, for monastics and for rulers, according to their various needs and circumstances.

The twentieth-century scholar D.C. Lau observes:

Almost all ancient Chinese thinkers were concerned with the way one should lead one’s life, and this was never confined to conduct in the personal sense, but covered the art of government as well. Politics and ethics, for the Chinese as for the ancient Greeks, were two aspects of the same thing, and this the Chinese thinkers called the *Dào*.

*D.C. Lau, Lao Tzu: Tao Te Ching, TTCL p.32*

In the case of the *Tiānshī* (‘Celestial Masters’) school of Daoism – founded in 142 CE, and probably the best known of the organized Daoist schools – nine precepts provided general behavioural guidelines for Daoist practitioners. These precepts or practices, based on the *Dàodé jīng*, are arranged in three tiers, each tier comprising a major *Dàodé jīng* doctrine supported by two lesser teachings:

1. Practise non-action.
2. Practise being soft and gentle.
3. Practise guarding the female and never move first.



4. Practise being nameless.
5. Practise being pure and tranquil.
6. Practise doing only good.
  
7. Practise having no desires.
8. Practise knowing when to stop.
9. Practise yielding and withdrawing.

*Lǎojūn jīnglǔ*, DZ786 1a; cf. in *LTTT* p.145

Adhering to the precepts in the highest tier (1 to 3), advanced adepts perfect themselves through the practice of *wúwéi* (non-action, unforced and selfless action). The first precept is supported by injunctions to be soft and gentle (rather than thrusting oneself forward), never to impose one's own will on people and events, and to act only when called for by circumstances.

Adhering to the precepts in the second tier (4 to 6), mid-level practitioners (who have not quite attained complete non-action) are advised to remain 'nameless' (not to seek fame), but rather to develop purity and tranquillity, and to perform only good works.

Adhering to the precepts in the lowest or introductory tier (7 to 9), entry-level students endeavour to remain free from desires and cravings, to adapt to their environment, and to yield to others by withdrawing their own wishes in favour of harmony with the world and thus with the *Dào*.

The *Tiānshī* school also had a further twenty-seven precepts comprising a mixture of general prohibitions, behavioural admonitions, and secular taboos (also ordered in three tiers) – all of which were intended to orient the disciple towards a higher level of purity and awareness. These precepts were later recorded in the *Xiǎng'ěr* commentary on the *Dàodé jīng*, during the time of the third celestial master Zhāng Lǚ (fl. 190–215).

These rules underpinned the Daoist theocracy which lasted for twenty-five years (423–448) during the *Wèi* dynasty (386–534). After the collapse of the theocracy, many Daoists fled to the Daoist centre at Lóuguān – where it is said that in the sixth century BCE, Lǎozǐ, on his way to lands beyond China's then western border, had shared his teachings with the guardian of the pass, Yīn Xǐ. Lóuguān became an important Daoist centre, and Lóuguān Daoists later played a key role in the sixth-century CE regeneration of Daoism in China. Influenced by Buddhist teachings, which were growing in popularity at that time, the Lóuguān-based Daoist group adopted and incorporated five moral precepts (*wǔjiè*), which were, in effect, the core precepts of lay Buddhism. The sixth-century *Lǎojūn jièjīng* ('Precept Scripture of Lord Lǎo') – which purportedly comprises instructions given by Lǎojūn (Lord Lǎo, the deified Lǎozǐ) to Yīn Xǐ – presents these as the basic code of ethics for lay Daoists and the general populace:

The first precept: no killing;  
 The second precept: no stealing;  
 The third precept: no sexual misconduct;  
 The fourth precept: no false speech;  
 The fifth precept: no consumption of intoxicants.  
 These are the five precepts (*wǔjiè*).

If any men or women can keep these five precepts (*wǔjiè*) and never violate any of them throughout their lives, they will be recognized as men and women with pure faith.

*Lǎojūn jièjīng*, DZ784 6a; cf. LJT

The *Lǎojūn jièjīng* goes on to interpret each of these five precepts (*wǔjiè*):

The precept against killing: all living beings – including all kinds of creature, even those as small as insects, worms, and so forth – are containers of the uncreated Energy; therefore one should not kill any of them.

The precept against stealing: a person should not take anything that he does not own and is not given to him, whether or not it belongs to someone else.

The precept against sexual misbehaviour: if there is sexual behaviour, but not between a man and a woman who are married to each other, it is sexual misbehaviour. As for a monk or nun, he or she should never marry or have sex with anyone.

The precept against false speech: if a person does not hear, see or feel something, or if something is not realized by his heart, but he relates it to others, this constitutes false speech.

The precept against taking intoxicants: a person should not take any intoxicants, unless necessary to cure an illness.

These five precepts (*wǔjiè*) are the fundamentals for keeping one's body pure, and are the roots for upholding the holy teachings. For those virtuous men and women who enjoy the virtuous teachings, if they can accept and keep (these precepts), and never violate any of them for as long as they live, they will be recognized as those with pure faith; they will find the way to the *Dào*, will perfect the holy principles, and will forever achieve the *Dào* – the Reality.

*Lǎojūn jièjīng*, DZ784 6b–8a; cf. LJT

To these five basic precepts, which formed the basis of Daoist monastic life, many stricter precepts were subsequently added.

Observing the human propensity to neglect the spiritual, the *Zhuāngzǐ* (c.C3rd BCE) advises diligent pursuit of the “heavenly” and disregard of the

worldly. These are simple and basic “precepts (*jīnshǒu*)” to be followed for “return to the Real (*zhēn*)”:

Therefore, it has been said: “Do not let the human obliterate the heavenly; do not let self-will obliterate one’s (true spiritual) life (*mìng*); do not let attainment (of *Dào*) be sacrificed to fame. Diligently observe these precepts (*jīnshǒu*), and you will return to the Real (*zhēn*).”

*Zhuāngzǐ* 17; cf. *CTT* p.166

The contemporary scholar Barbara Hendrichske argues that Daoism has a long tradition of environmental concern, dating from well before the Common Era,<sup>3</sup> founded on Daoist respect for the natural world, including the obligation to preserve and protect it rather than exploit and destroy it. The *Huáinánzǐ* (c. 139 BCE), for example, has much to say against the human abuse of natural resources,<sup>4</sup> and among the *180 Precepts of Lord Lǎo* (C4th CE) there are several precepts or commandments (*jiè*) relating to negative impacts on the environment, both natural and man-made:

You should not improperly dig the earth  
or spoil mountains and rivers. . . .  
You should not throw foul things into wells.  
You should not block up ponds and wells.

*Lǎojūn shuō yībǎi bāshí jiè* 47, 100–1, *DZ*786 6a, 8a, *DZ*1032, in *SGPT* p.256

1. *Yùqīng tāiyuán nèiyǎng zhēnjīng*, in *Sūn Bù’èr yuánjūn chuánshù dāndào mìshū*, *ZW*371, *JY*204.
2. *Yījīng* 60.
3. See Barbara Hendrichske, *Great Peace*, *SGPT* p.255ff.
4. E.g. *Huáinánzǐ* 8, *DZ*1184.

**jihād** (A/P) *Lit.* strife, effort, struggle, combat; derived from *jāhada* (to strive, to struggle), and etymologically related to *jāhd* (effort, ability, exertion, power), *ijtihād* (striving), *mujāhadah* (spiritual effort) and *mujāhid* (strug-gler, one who strives), all words suggesting the exertion of power as in the repelling of an enemy; hence, a crusade; commonly translated, particularly by European writers, as ‘holy war’, implying warfare waged to protect Islam from aggressors or to extend its frontiers; understood as such by many *faqīhs* (jurists, scholars of *fiqh* or Islamic law), who have established elaborate laws related to *jihād* as warfare.

Some Muslim writers have maintained that the idea of extending Islam by force was not taught by Muḥammad and is not advocated in the *Qur’ān*. In the earlier revelations of the *Qur’ān*, the revelations received by Muḥammad

while at Mecca, before the onset of fighting, *jihād* and its allied verb forms (*jāhada*, *jāhidu*) are used with no implication of warfare:

And therefore strive hard (*jāhidu*) for *Allāh*  
with due striving (*jihād*).

*Qur'ān* 22:78; cf. *AYA*

And those who strive hard (*jāhada*) for Us,  
We shall certainly guide them in our ways.

*Qur'ān* 29:69; cf. *AYA*

After Muḥammad was forced to flee from Mecca to Madīnah, the situation changed to some extent. At Mecca, the watchword became 'patience under attack',<sup>1</sup> whereas at Madīnah permission to fight was given because after the move to Madīnah, the *Quraysh* were intent on the extinction of all Muslims. But this "permission" was qualified: "Permission (to fight) is given to those on whom war is made,"<sup>2</sup> and "be not aggressive; surely *Allāh* loves not the aggressors."<sup>3</sup> Indeed, according to a traditional saying (*ḥadīth*) of Muḥammad, "A human being is God's edifice, and he who destroys this edifice is accursed."<sup>4</sup>

As both Quranic verses and Muḥammad's repeated example made clear, warfare begun in defence was to cease the moment the enemy desired peace, without reference to conversion to Islam. Even the so-called 'verse of the sword', "... and slay the idolaters wherever you find them,"<sup>5</sup> when read in the context of the full chapter, refers only to those idolaters who "attacked you first".<sup>6</sup> The concept of extending Islam by force was, therefore, a later invention.<sup>7</sup>

Sufis and others have frequently pointed out that the true *jihād* is the individual war or struggle against the lower aspects of one's own human nature, the *nafs*. Muḥammad himself is quoted in this respect, as Hujwīrī recalls:

The Prophet said: "The *mujāhid* is he who struggles with all his might against himself (*jāhada nafsahu*) for God's sake." And he also said (on return from battle): "We have returned from the lesser holy war (*al-jihād al-aṣghar*) to the greater holy war (*al-jihād al-akbar*). On being asked, "What is the greater war?" he replied, "It is the struggle against one's self" (*mujāhadat al-nafs*).

*Hujwīrī, Kashf al-Maḥjūb* XIV, KMM pp.251–52; cf. *KM* p.200

Ni'mat Allāh Valī writes in a similar manner:

The *Qur'ān* states, "So turn in penitence to your Creator, and kill your *nafs*."<sup>8</sup> The Prophet said, "We have returned from the lesser crusade

(*al-jihād al-aṣghar*) to the greater one.” He was asked, “O Prophet, what is the greater crusade (*al-jihād al-akbar*)?” To which he replied, “Combat with the *nafs*.”

In another tradition he said, “The crusader (*mujāhid*) is he who battles the *nafs*.”<sup>9</sup> Whoever dies to the passions of the *nafs* comes to life through guidance out of error and through gnosis out of ignorance. The *Qur’ān* states, “We raised him unto life,”<sup>10</sup> meaning, ‘We have brought the one, who was dead through ignorance, to life in awareness.’ As the Prophet said, “One who comes to life through awareness will never die”:

This is the death (*mawt*) that brings immortal life;  
This is the death (*mawt*) that you must die.

*Shāh Nī’mat Allāh Valī, Rasā’il, RNV4 pp.76–77; cf. in SSE5 p.171*

Another *ḥadīth* to the same effect, credited to Muḥammad, is quoted by al-Ghazālī: “A man can wage *jihād* without quitting his own home.”<sup>11</sup>

There are therefore said to be two types of *jihād*. Firstly, *al-jihād al-akbar* (the greater *jihād*), which entails gaining mastery over human passions and weaknesses. Secondly, *al-jihād al-aṣghar* (the lesser *jihād*), which is physical battle with aggressors. To the well-known Sufi, Shaykh ‘Abd al-Qādir Jīlānī,

a *jihād* fought against self-will was . . . far superior to that waged with the sword. Through this struggle, the idolatry of the self and the worship of created things could be vanquished.

*Saīyid Athar Abbas Rizvi, in History of Sufism in India, HSI1 p.85*

Like many other mystics, the Sufis thus likened the effort to overcome the ego and the lower tendencies of the *nafs* to a battle. As Rūmī says:

The prophets and saints do not avoid spiritual combat (*mujāhadah*). The first spiritual combat (*mujāhadah*) they undertake in their quest is the killing of the ego and the abandonment of personal wishes and sensual desires. This is the greater holy war (*jihād-i akbar*).

*Rūmī, Fīhi mā Fīhi 31, KFF p.130, in SPL p.154; cf. DRA pp.140–41*

Commenting on the well-known saying of Muḥammad, he observes:

O kings, we have slain the outward enemy,  
but there remains within us a worse enemy than he.  
To slay this enemy is not the work of reason and intelligence:  
the inward lion is not subdued by the hare.  
This carnal self (*nafs*) is hell, and hell is a dragon (whose fire)  
is not diminished by oceans of water. . . .

When I turned back from the outer warfare (*paykār-i birūn*),  
 I set my face towards the inner warfare (*paykār-i darūn*).  
 We have turned from the lesser *jihād*,  
     we are engaged along with the Prophet in the greater *jihād*.  
 I pray God to grant me strength and aid and the right to boast,  
     that I may root up with a needle this mountain of *Qāf*.  
 Deem of small account the lion (champion)  
     who breaks the ranks of the enemy:  
 The true lion is he that breaks (conquers) himself.

*Rūmī, Maṣnavī I:1373–75, 1386–89, MJR2 p.76*

Conquering warriors boast of their exploits in battle. Rūmī says that the true “right to boast” arises from the slow and determined conquest of the self, like rooting up a mountain with a needle.

In this fight, he stresses the importance of having a weapon that is genuine and worthy, not a toy. He compares exoteric religion to a “wooden sword” in a “sheath” and the divine creative power to the “sword” of the “Elixir” “in the armoury of the saints”. To acquire this sword, he says, it is necessary to associate with the saints. But so long as the spirit is trapped in the “sheath” of the body, it is difficult to determine whether the “sword” taken to fight the battle is of steel or wood. But the relative efficacy of the two is revealed not only at the time of death, but also in the daily battle against the lower self. The divine power is of far greater help than exoteric religion in the effort required to withdraw the soul from the body, and go through the process of dying while living:

Beyond dispute, in this body, the spirit that is devoid of reality  
     is like a wooden sword in the sheath.  
 While it remains in the sheath, it is apparently valuable,  
     but when it is taken out, it is an implement only fit for burning.  
 Do not take a wooden sword into battle!  
 Check first, in order that your plight may not be wretched.  
 If it is made of wood, go, seek another,  
     and if it is of adamant, march forward joyously.  
 Such a sword is in the armoury of the saints:  
     to associate with them is for you the Elixir (of Life).  
 The wise have all said the same thing:  
     a wise man is a mercy to created beings.

*Rūmī, Maṣnavī I:712–17; cf. MJR2 pp.40–41*

Using a different expression for the greater war (*ghazā-yi mihīn*), Anṣārī concludes that it is far easier to kill others than to kill one’s ego:

One finds plenty of infidel slayers, but few self slayers. To wield the blade of dissatisfaction and sever the head of the passions of the commanding *nafs* (*nafs al-ammārah*) is to undertake the greater war (*ghazā-yi mihīn*).

*Anṣārī, Majmū'ah-'i Rasā'il, RAAA1 p.163; cf. in SSE3 p.121*

1. *E.g. Qur'ān* 2:45, 153, 3:125, 7:126, 8:46, 16:42, 16:126–27, 40:77, 46:35, 70:5, 76:24.
2. *Qur'ān* 22:39.
3. *Qur'ān* 2:190.
4. *Ḥadīth*, in *Ta'rīfāt, KTJ* p.83, in *SSE2* p.30.
5. *Qur'ān* 9:5; cf. *AYA*.
6. *Qur'ān* 9:13.
7. See Muḥammad 'Alī, *Religion of Islām, RI* pp.405–42.
8. *Qur'ān* 2:54.
9. *Ḥadīth*, in *Mu'jam al-Fahris* (vol. 1, p.389), in *RNV4* p.524.
10. *Qur'ān* 6:122.
11. *Ḥadīth*, in *al-Ghazālī, Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn* 37:1.3, in *GCK* p.xlvi (n.2).

**jihād al-akbar, al-** (A), **jihād-i akbar** (P) *Lit.* the greater combat; the greater holy war; the battle against the lower self (*nafs*). See **jihād**.

**jihād al-aṣghar, al-** (A), **jihād-i aṣghar** (P) *Lit.* the lesser combat (*jihād*); the lesser holy war; a physical battle against unbelievers. See **jihād**.

**jihatsu** (J) *Lit.* a set of three, differently sized, nested eating bowls used in *Zen* monasteries and given to newly ordained monks and nuns; generally made of red- or black-lacquered wood. The set of bowls, together with utensils wrapped together in a cloth, are a part of a form of mindful eating known as *ōryōki* (*lit.* quantity in proportion to container, *i.e.* just enough) that is prevalent among the laity as well as being the common eating practice in *Zen* monasteries. The *jihatsu* bowls may also be used for collecting alms.

See also: **piṇḍapātra, takuhatsu**.

**jìnyùzhǔyì** (C) *Lit.* suppression (*jìn*) of desire (*yù*) + ‘-ology (*zhǔyì*)’; asceticism. See **kǔxíng**.

**jñāna-kāṇḍ(a)** (S/H) *Lit.* knowledge (*jñāna*) part (*kāṇḍa*); that part of the *Vedas* (i.e. the *Upanishads*) that contains an exposition of the knowledge of *Brahman* and the real *Ātman* (Self, Soul), which leads to liberation of the soul; contrasted with *karma-kāṇḍa* (observances part, ritualistic part), which deals with rites, rituals and sacrifices, and the merit arising from their performance, and is represented by the *Brāhmaṇas* and *Samhitās*. See **karma-kāṇḍa**.

**Ka'bah** (A/P) *Lit.* cube; the most sacred place of Muslim pilgrimage; also called the Sacred House, the House of Sanctuary (*Bayt al-Ḥarām*), or the House; a cube-like building (about 10 x 14 metres at its base, and 15 metres high), located in the centre of the Sacred Mosque in Mecca.

In the south-east corner of the *Ka'bah*, is placed the Black Stone (*al-Ḥajar al-Aswad*), mounted about 1.4 metres above the ground and covered – to prevent its being worn away by the touches and kisses of pilgrims – by an ornate black cloth, edged at the top with a band of Quranic writings embroidered in gold thread. The cloth is replaced once a year, after the annual pilgrimage.

According to Islamic tradition, the *Ka'bah* was originally built by Adam and, after his death, rebuilt by his son Seth. Later on, according to the *Qur'ān*, it was again rebuilt by the prophet Ibrāhīm (Abraham) with the aid of his son Ismā'īl (Ishmael). According to a combination of both historic and legendary sources, the *Ka'bah* has been reconstructed from time to time, throughout the ages. It is mentioned by the historian Azraqī several hundred years before Muḥammad, where its height without a roof is given as approximately fifteen feet. Several other major reconstructions have taken place both before and after the time of the Prophet. In its long history, it has – on various occasions – been destroyed by enemies, burnt to the ground, and severely damaged by flood. The modern *Ka'bah* is constructed of grey Meccan stone in large blocks of different sizes, jointed with cement mortar.

The original dimensions of the Black Stone are uncertain, and it has been reconstituted on several occasions during its history. Different reports from various periods during the last millennium have described it as being around 1.5 metres to 20 centimetres long. At present times, the displayed face of the Black Stone is oval in shape, about 16 centimetres wide and 20 centimetres high, consisting of several fragments held together in a silver surround. The Muslim pilgrim, in his or her circumambulation of the *Ka'bah*, kisses or touches the stone, or makes a gesture in its direction, immediately putting the fingers to the lips. According to tradition, it is one of a number of precious stones of paradise that fell to earth with Adam, who placed it in the original *Ka'bah*. Later, it is supposed to have been hidden in a nearby mountain, and was returned to Ibrāhīm by the angel *Jabrā'īl* (Gabriel), when Ibrāhīm was rebuilding the *Ka'bah*. It is believed that the stone is actually as white as snow, and is only superficially black, having become so from the kisses of



countless pilgrims. It is also said to be lighter than air. Some have maintained that the stone is a meteorite.

During the siege of Mecca in 683 CE, the *Ka'bah* was set on fire by a flaming arrow and the Black Stone was split into three by the intense heat. Six centuries later, the stone was captured by raiders who attempted to ransom it. Their demand, however, was ignored. Twenty years later, the stone was returned, being thrown into a mosque, together with the note, "By command we took it, and by command we have brought it back." At the present time, the stone is in seven pieces.

Although neither the *Ka'bah* nor the stone are objects of specific worship, they are venerated as deeply sacred by devout Muslims, who all aspire to make the pilgrimage (*hajj*) to Mecca one day.

There are a number of places in the *Qur'ān* which are taken as direct or indirect references to the *Ka'bah*:

*Allāh* has appointed the *Ka'bah*, the Sacred House (*al-Bayt al-Ḥarām*), and the sacred month and the sacrificial offerings with their ornaments to be lasting values for humanity. This is so that you may know that *Allāh* has knowledge of all that is in the heavens and all that is on earth, and that *Allāh* has knowledge of all things.

*Qur'ān* 5:97; cf. AYA, KPA

We made the House (*al-Bayt*) a resort for humanity, and a sanctuary, saying: "Take as your place of worship the place where Ibrāhīm stood." And We imposed a duty upon Ibrāhīm and Ismā'īl, saying: "Purify my House (*Bayt*) for those who walk around it, and for those who meditate in it, and for those who kneel and prostrate themselves."

And when Abraham prayed: "My Lord! Make this a land of peace and bestow plenty upon its people, such of them as believe in *Allāh* and the Last Day," He answered: "As for those that believe not, I shall leave them in contentment for a while, and then I shall drag them to the doom of the fire – a hapless end!"

And when Abraham and Ismā'īl were raising the foundations of the House (*al-Bayt*), Abraham prayed: "Our Lord! Accept this from us. For You are the only one who hears and knows all. Our Lord! Make us submissive to You, and of our descendants, a nation submissive to You. Teach us our rites of worship, and be merciful to us. For only You are forgiving and merciful."

*Qur'ān* 2:125–28; cf. AYA, KPA

Many Sufis have been on a *hajj* as a part of their Muslim faith. Others, however, observing people spending their time, energy and money on *hajj*, have pointed out that the holiest of all places is the dwelling place of God

within the human heart. Ibn al-‘Arabī says that the *Ka‘bah* of the heart is the “noblest house in the man of faith”.<sup>1</sup> The heart, says Ḥāfiẓ, is the real *Ka‘bah*, to be ‘circumambulated’ by the inward love and attention of the devotee:

The heart heard the news of the circumambulation (*ṭawāf*)  
of the *Ka‘bah* of your street:  
Through desire for the sacred sanctuary (*ḥarīm*) of your street,  
it lost all interest in *Hijāz* (the region around Mecca).  
*Ḥāfiẓ, Dīwān, DHA p.134, DIH p.236; cf. DHWC (304:6) p.528*

The *Ka‘bah* is not alone in being surrounded by a desert:  
the *Ka‘bah* of the heart is surrounded  
by the wilderness of its desires.

*Ṣā‘ib Tabrīzī, Kullīyāt, KSMN p.2, in SSE4 p.166*

Speaking of a certain Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad ibn al-Faḍl al-Balkhī, Hujwīrī writes:

It is related that he said: “I wonder at those who cross deserts and wilderness to reach that idol temple (*but-khānah*) because the traces (*āthār*, relics, presence) of His prophets are to be found there. Why do they not cross their own passions and lusts to reach their hearts, where they will find the traces of their Lord?” That is to say, the heart is the seat of the knowledge of God and is more venerable than the *Ka‘bah*, to which men turn in devotion. Men are ever looking towards the *Ka‘bah*, but God is ever looking towards the heart. Wherever the heart is, my Beloved is there. Wherever His decree is, my desire is there; wherever the traces (*āthār*, presence) of my prophets are, the eyes of those whom I love are directed there.

*Hujwīrī, Kashf al-Maḥjūb XI, KMM p.177; cf. KM pp.140–41*

Emphasizing the point, Ḥāfiẓ says that since God is everywhere, He is as much in the *Ka‘bah* as in the idol temple, idolatry being an unforgivable sin in Islam:

Between the *Ka‘bah* and the idol temple,  
there is little difference:  
He is present equally, everywhere you look.

*Ḥāfiẓ, Dīwān; cf. DHWC (107:5) p.228*

Likewise, the Punjabi Sufis, Sulṭān Bāhū and Bulleh Shāh both point out that God is not to be found at the *Ka‘bah*:

Not in the lofty heavens above does God reside,  
nor does He dwell in the *Ka'bah*.

*Sulṭān Bāhū, Bait 178, SBU p.461; cf. SBE p.350*

God is not found in the mosque, nor in the *Ka'bah*:  
neither is He in the *Qur'ān*, nor found in prayers.  
I did not see God in places of pilgrimage:  
in vain did I trudge long distances.

*Bulleh Shāh, Kullīyāt, KBS p.366, SBSU p.463; cf. BSPS p.468*

Bulleh Shāh often uses the well-known love story of Hīr and Rānjhā as a symbol of divine love. The beloved (Rānjhā) lived at Hazārah. Hence, he writes:

Why should I go to the *Ka'bah*?  
My heart pines for the throne of Hazārah.  
People prostrate themselves before the *Ka'bah*,  
I offer my prostrations to my beloved.

*Bulleh Shāh, Kullīyāt 125, KBS p.271, SBSU p.421; cf. BSPS p.348*

Emphasizing the common Sufi attitude towards the *Ka'bah* are a number of apocryphal legends. Rābi'ah Baṣrī, for example, while on her way to Mecca, is said to have seen the *Ka'bah* coming across the desert to welcome her. At this she exclaimed, "I need the Lord of the *Ka'bah*. What have I to do with the *Ka'bah*? Its power means nothing to me. What delight is there in the *Ka'bah*'s beauty? What I need to welcome me is the one who said, 'Whoever approaches me by a hand's span, I will approach by an arm's span.'<sup>2</sup> Why should I look at the *Ka'bah*?"<sup>3</sup>

Similarly, the Sufi *shaykh* Abū Sa'īd al-Khayr, while accompanying his son on a pilgrimage to Mecca, lodged for a few days with his contemporary Abū al-Ḥasan. Abū al-Ḥasan, enfeebled by old age, was delighted to have Abū Sa'īd's company, but was unable to go with them on their journey. Begging Abū Sa'īd not to continue, he said that every night he could see the *Ka'bah* circumambulating Abū Sa'īd's head.<sup>4</sup>

See also: **ḥajj**, **Mecca**, **ṭawāf**.

1. Ibn al-'Arabī, *Meccan Revelations* 3:250.24, *FMIA5* (4:355) p.370, *SPK* p.107.
2. *Ḥadīth Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* 4:48.2675; *Ḥadīth Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* 9:93.502, *Dhikr* 2, 3, 20–22, *Tawbah* 1; cf. in *EIM* p.157.
3. In *Tadhkirat al-Awliyā'* 1, *TANI* pp.61–62, in *EIM* p.157.
4. Abū Sa'īd al-Khayr, in *Asrār al-Tawḥīd*, *ATSI* p.137, in *SIM* p.44.

**kachh** (Pu) *Lit.* short trousers; one of the five traditional signs by which a follower of the Sikh religion may be recognized. See **panj kakkā**.

**kaffārah** (A), **kaffārat** (P) (pl. *kaffārāt*) *Lit.* expiation, atonement; a Muslim practice by which the expiation or forgiveness of sins is sought by offering a sacrifice, by fasting, by making donations to the poor, or by some other penance; can also refer to the sacrificing of one's life for some cause.

According to a *ḥadīth* attributed to Muḥammad, God asks the Prophet concerning the nature of a dispute that is going on among the angels in the heavenly realms. The *ḥadīth* arises from a verse in the *Qur'ān*, in which the Prophet is instructed by God to say, "I have no knowledge of the high council when they dispute among themselves."<sup>1</sup> According to the *ḥadīth*, the angels are arguing about expiations (*kaffārāt*), although in neither the *Qur'ān* nor the *ḥadīth* is any reason given why the angels in heaven, who only do God's will,<sup>2</sup> should be arguing at all:

My Lord – inaccessible and majestic He – came to me at night in the most beautiful form. He said: "O Muḥammad!" I said, "Here I am, my Lord, at Your service." He said, "What is the high council disputing about?" I said, "I know not, my Lord."

He asked this two or three times. Then He placed His palm between my shoulders. I felt its coolness between my breasts, and everything in the heavens and the earth was disclosed to me.... Then He said, "O Muḥammad! What is the high council disputing about?" I said, "About expiations (*kaffārāt*)." He said, "And what are expiations?" I said, "Going on foot to congregations, sitting in the mosque after the prayers, and performing the ablutions fully in difficult circumstances. He who does that lives in good and dies in good. His offences are like the day his mother bore him."

*Ḥadīth, Dārimī, Ru'yā 12; Aḥmad 1:378, 4:66, 5:243, 378; cf. SPK p.68*

See also: **fidā'ī** (7.1), **sin and evil** (6.2).

1. *Qur'ān* 38:69; cf. AYA.

2. *Qur'ān* 66:6.

**kaihōgyō** (J) *Lit.* circling (*kai*) mountain (*hō*) journey (*gyō*); a *Shugendō-Tendai* practice of circumambulating Mount Hiei while chanting, meditating, and praying.

Though taking its inspiration from *Shugendō* mountain worship, the practice is traditionally said to have been started by the ninth-century *Tendai*

Buddhist monk Sōō Oshō (831–918). *Kaihōgyō* practice can last for a day, for 100 days, or for 1,000 days carried out over a seven-year period. In the latter case, 25 to 50 miles are run on each of the 1,000 days. The 1,000 days are broken up into two phases. The merit acquired from the first 700 days is dedicated to the practitioner’s benefit, and that from the remaining 300 to the benefit of others. Between the two phases, the practitioner undertakes an extraordinarily severe nine-day fast, abstaining from food, water, rest, and sleep. So gruelling is the practice that in the last 130 years only 46 have been able to complete the course.<sup>1</sup>

See also: **Shugendō, yamabushi** (7.1).

1. See John Stevens, *Marathon Monks of Mount Hiei*, MMMH p.55ff.; “Kaihōgyō,” *Wikipedia*, ret. December 2016; Adharanand Finn, “What I learned when I met the monk who ran 1,000 marathons,” *The Guardian*, theguardian.com, ret. September 2016.

**kāiyǎn** (C), **kaigen** (J), **spyan phyé** (T) *Lit.* open (*kāi*) the eyes (*yǎn*); an ‘eye-opening’ ceremony of Indian origin intended to consecrate, animate and imbue with spiritual power a newly carved cast, modelled or painted image of a *buddha*, *bodhisattva* or guardian deity, by painting or inking in the black pupils of the eyes on the image or (sometimes) by putting drops into its eyes; also called in Chinese *kāi guāng míng* (opening the light of the eyes, opening the brightness of the light), *kāi guāng* (open the light), *kāi míng* (open the brightness) and *diǎnyǎn* (dotting the eyes), terms rendered in Japanese as *kaikō myō*, *kaikō*, *kai myō* and *tengen*, respectively; a ritual or sequence of rituals conducted in order to consecrate a new image when it is installed in a temple or monastery. In Japan, the ritual is more commonly known as *kaigen*, rather than *tengen*. In Korea, where the earliest record of the ceremony appears in a *mantra* anthology dated 1476, different ceremonies are performed for different kinds of images.

The ceremony is preceded by placing a five-coloured thread, coins (symbolizing dragon’s eyes) and a mirror upon the image, following which offerings of incense, flowers, food and lamps or candles are made to it. The ceremony concludes with the opening or dotting of the eyes to the recitation of *mantras*. The details vary among the different traditions. Sometimes, the image may be draped, and the focal point of the ceremony is the unveiling of the image. Some tantric texts provide elaborate details for conducting the ceremony, including performance of the customary tantric *mantras* and *mudrās*. The ritual is believed to open the *buddha* eye (*fóyǎn*) of the image, and to bestow spiritual energy upon it, investing it with the power of the particular *buddha*, *bodhisattva*, or deity. This permits devotees to look

straight into the eyes of the image, which in turn is believed to be looking at the devotees.

In Chinese *Chán* texts, ‘dotting the eyes’ refers to the spiritual awakening (S. *bodhi*) of a student. The Japanese *kaigen* likewise implies enlightenment, when the student’s divine or *buddha* eye is opened.<sup>1</sup>

1. See “kaigen,” *Illustrated Encyclopedia of Zen Buddhism*, IEZB; “kaigen,” *Oxford Dictionary of Buddhism*, ODB; “dianyan,” “kaiyan,” *Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*, PDB.

**kalimāt** (A/P) (sg. *kalimah*) *Lit.* words, speech; in Islam, the six *kalimāt*, derived from sayings in the *Qur’ān* and the Muslim tradition (*ḥadīth*), which encapsulate the essential beliefs of Islam; particularly prevalent among Muslims in South Asia. Some Muslim traditions list five *kalimāt*.

The origin of the *kalimāt* is uncertain, though it is generally believed that they were created as an educational *aide-mémoire*, for especial use with children, so that the fundamental beliefs of Islam could be easily learnt and memorized. The expression ‘six *kalimāt*’ does not appear in any accredited textual source, nor do the complete *kalimāt* themselves appear verbatim in the *Qur’ān* or the *ḥadīth*.

Compiled by an unknown hand at an uncertain date by amalgamation of various verses and sayings from the *Qur’ān* and *ḥadīth*, the six *kalimāt* are:

1. *Kalimah ṭayyibah*, *kalim al-ṭayyib*.<sup>1</sup> Word of purity (*ṭayyibah*):

There is no God but *Allāh*; Muḥammad is the Messenger of *Allāh*.

*Kalimah ṭayyibah*; cf. e.g. *Qur’ān* 3:62, 33:40;

*Ḥadīth Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* 1:43, 4:740, HSM

2. *Kalimah shahādah*. Word of testimony (*shahādah*), word of witness:

I bear witness that none is worthy of worship but *Allāh*, the One alone, without partner, and I bear witness that Muḥammad is His servant and Messenger.

*Kalimah shahādah*

3. *Kalimah tamjīd*. Word of glorification (*tamjīd*):

Glory be to *Allāh* and praise to *Allāh*, and there is none worthy of worship but *Allāh*, and *Allāh* is the greatest. There is no might or power except with *Allāh*, the Exalted, the Great One.

*Kalimah tamjīd*

4. *Kalimah tawḥīd*. Word of oneness (*tawḥīd*):

There is none worthy of worship except *Allāh*. He is only One; there are no partners for Him. For Him is the kingdom, and for Him is the praise. He gives life and causes death; and He is alive. He is eternal, possessor of majesty and reverence. In His hand is the goodness, and He is the goodness; and He is on everything powerful.

*Kalimah tawḥīd*

5. *Kalimah istaghfar*. Word of forgiveness (*istaghfar*):

I seek forgiveness from *Allāh*, my Lord, from every sin I committed knowingly or unknowingly, secretly or openly, and I turn towards Him from the sin that I know and from the sin that I do not know. Certainly You, You are the knower of the hidden things, the Concealer of mistakes, and the Forgiver of sins. There is no power and no strength except from *Allāh*, the Most High, the Most Great.

*Kalimah istaghfar*

6. *Kalimah radd kufr*. Word of rejecting (*radd*) disbelief (*kufr*):

O *Allāh*! I seek protection in You from knowingly joining any partners with You. . . . I seek Your forgiveness for that which I have done unknowingly, and I repent of it. I reject disbelief (*kufr*), and joining partners with You (*shirk*), and falsehood and slandering (*ghībat*), and innovation in religion (*bid'at*), and gossip (*namīmat*), and bad, shameful deeds (*fawāḥish*), and the associated blame and disobedience – all of them. I submit to Your will, and I believe and declare: “There is none worthy of worship except *Allāh*, and Muḥammad is His Messenger.”

*Kalimah radd kufr*

See also: **shahādah**, **shirk**, **subḥah**, **takbīr**, **tasbīḥ**, **tawḥīd** (8.1).

1. *Qur'ān* 35:10.

**kalyāṇak(a)** (S/H) *Lit.* auspicious; in Jainism, one of the five auspicious moments in the life of a *Tīrthankara*, viz. conception (*garbha*) or descent (*chyāvana*), birth (*janma*), renunciation (*vairāgya*), enlightenment or omniscience (*kevala-jñāna*), and liberation (*moksha*, *nirvāṇa*); also known as the *pañcha-kalyāṇaka* (five auspicious moments). The third *kalyāṇaka* is

also called the *dīkshā* (initiation) or *tapas* (austerity) *kalyāṇaka*, signalling a *Tīrthankara*'s renunciation of the world and the occasion of his or her first discourse. The *kalyāṇakas* are believed to be heralded by heavenly beings. They are celebrated and may be re-enacted at Jain religious festivals, such as the Mahāvīra *Janma-Kalyāṇaka* or Mahāvīra *Jayantī*, which celebrates the birth of Mahāvīra, the twenty-fourth *Tīrthankara* in the present cycle.

**kā mahunu, whakapāhunu** (Mo) *Lit.* to be scorched or burned (*kā mahunu*); to cause (*whaka*) to burn (*pāhunu*); hence, to cause anxiety, to discourage (*whakapāhunu*); a Māori magic ritual intended to make a person aware of his misdeeds.

The New Zealand ethnographer Elsdon Best (1856–1931) mentions the rite as a part of the magic commonly used by the Māori:

Magic was employed in connection with many activities of Māori life, and ... it was sometimes relied upon for a very singular purpose. For example, several natives have told me about a peculiar rite of white magic formerly practised in order to awaken a person's conscience, to render him mentally uneasy and so lead to his mending his ways. This peculiar ceremony or charm was known as *kā mahunu* and *whakapāhunu*. In one case mentioned, an ancestor named Whakarau had been treated in an inhospitable manner, and so resorted to this charm in order to cause the churlish one to repent and be more gracious.

*Elsdon Best, Maori Religion and Mythology, MRM2 pp.104–5*

And again:

In olden times a singular rite known as *kā mahunu* or *whakapāhunu* obtained in this district (Bay of Plenty). Its object was to render a person of evil ways ashamed of his actions, to prick his conscience and make him uneasy in his mind, until he reformed. It was not black magic, *mākutu*, which would have sought his life, but the sort of thing that a person would exercise on a relative whom he did not wish to slay, on account of the objectionable behaviour or habits of such relatives.... It was performed to an invocation, one of the many which come under the generic term of *ahi* (fire). It took place at a sacred fire known as the *ahi whakaene*.

*Elsdon Best, "Notes on the Art of War," NAWB p.52*



**kanghā** (H/Pu) *Lit.* a comb; one of the five external symbols of a follower of the Sikh religion. See **panj kakkā**.

**kapu** (Hw) *Lit.* sacred, holy, consecrated; prohibited, forbidden; sacredness; no trespassing, keep out; imbued with *mana* (spiritual power or energy); a prominent aspect of traditional Hawaiian religion and social governance, including politics and gender roles; cognate with the Māori *tapu* and the Tongan *tabu*, which is the origin of the anglicization ‘taboo’; contrasted with *noa* (common, free of *kapu*).

Practically all aspects of traditional life, great and small, were governed by the powerful belief in *kapu*. *Kapu* took many forms. ‘*Ili* (skin) *kapu* forbade the wearing of another person’s clothing; ‘*ai* (food) *kapu* covered various restrictions and observances regarding diet and eating habits; *hei* (sacred) *kapu* was the place where the *kāhuna* sought messages from the gods; *hu‘a* (boundary) *kapu* marked the borders of a *kapu* site; *kapu kai* (sea) was ritual purification by bathing in the sea or salt water. Many traditional crafts and occupations were learned and practised under *kapu* rules. Some individuals were regarded as especially *kapu*, perhaps because of a dream or vision they or others had experienced.

*Kapu* rules governed many aspects of childbirth, sexual relations, and other matters concerning gender. Women especially were restricted by multiple rules of *kapu*. It was *kapu*, for instance, for women to eat with men. The American writer Scott Cunningham (1956–1993), who spent much of his short adult life studying ancient Hawaiian culture, describes many of these prohibitions:

Many *kapu* pertained exclusively to women. The *kapu* of the *akua* (ancestor deities) decreed that women weren’t permitted to eat with men, cook their own food, touch fishing equipment, or enter the temples.

Women’s food *kapu* (‘*ai kapu*) are among the most famous. Forbidden to them were the coconut (a body form of the deity *Kū*, and never extremely abundant), all varieties of bananas save for two types (the banana is a body form of the deity *Kanaloa* and wasn’t particularly relished as food), several types of fish used in rituals (such as the *ulua* and *kūmū*), and the manta ray, sea turtle, and whale (all body forms of *Kanaloa*).

Pork was forbidden to women, as it was used in sacrifices to the deities. Other foods, such as shark, were reserved for the *ali‘i* (aristocracy, but only those who didn’t have a shark ‘*aumakua* as their personal deity). Only women of the higher rank could ever eat such foods, and then only in extraordinary situations.

Some say that these food prohibitions were instituted in the past when the birth rate was growing to such an alarming extent that overpopulation threatened continued human existence on these small islands. Women were forced to observe less nourishing diet to slow the birth rate. Others say that these food *kapu* were designed to have the opposite effect: to increase the birth rate by strengthening women's reproductive abilities. . . .

Fishing had its unique share of *kapu*. Women were forbidden to touch fishing hooks, fishing lines, nets, octopus lures, or any other equipment of the fisherman. The fisherman's mate couldn't have sex while he was out fishing, nor could his family fight or the fisherman's bait be eaten. Some fishermen never wore red, the colour of *Ku'ula* (the fishing deity), and forbade the presence of bananas on board their outrigger canoes. Some of these *kapu* were religious, others were personal. The legion of prohibitions associated with fishing illuminates the importance of fish in the diet of the early Hawaiians.

*Scott Cunningham, Hawaiian Religion & Magic, HRMC pp.71–73*

The making of sounds at inappropriate times was also *kapu*:

During certain ceremonies, particularly the dedication of war temples, sound of any kind was *kapu*. Dogs and chickens were covered with gourds to silence them and children were trained to keep quiet. Words and all sounds were conduits of power; therefore, they had to be carefully controlled during solemn rituals.

*Scott Cunningham, Hawaiian Religion & Magic, HRMC p.72*

High chiefs and *kāhuna* (shamans) used the *kapu* system to promote conservation, maintain an abundant food supply, and generally to keep their subjects in order. Hundreds of such *kapus* existed. These included: not bathing too far upstream to prevent the contamination of drinking water; not trespassing near the property of *ali'i* (aristocracy); and no fishing for certain species of fish during particular seasons of the year. Sometimes, groves of certain trees were made off-limits when required for ecological reasons – something that was automatically understood by all,

Significant *kapu* surrounded the aristocracy. The Hawaiian social order consisted of three classes: the nobility or chiefly class (*ali'i*), commoners, and slaves (*kauwā*). The chiefly class, consisting of chiefs and *kāhuna*, made all the rules (*kapus*). When entering the presence of a chief, it was *kapu* to touch his hair or fingernail clippings, to look at him directly, or for one's head to be higher than his. Feathers of red or yellow were a sign of royalty, and wearing them was also *kapu*, except for the highest ranking nobility. Practically

everything belonging to a chief was *kapu*. Wearing his loincloth or indeed handling any of his possessions was a capital offence, as was trespass on the territory of an *ali* 'i. Even the name of a chief was *kapu*:

The commoners comprised only those people who have no chiefly blood. A chief is known by his name. This is a peculiarity of Hawaii. The name of a chief is *kapu*, and cannot be given to a commoner or he would die. Hence the chiefs are distinguished by their names from the commoners and the commoners from the chiefs. . . . Among the white people, names are not significant, but to the Hawaiian the name is important.

*Martha Warren Beckwith, Kepelino's Traditions of Hawaii, KTHB p.142*

Much of the *kapu* system hinged upon the concept of *mana*, and some of the rules were as inconvenient for a chief as they were for a commoner:

In one view, man's shadow contained some of his *mana*. No one, commoner or lesser *ali* 'i, dared let his shadow fall on the highest-ranking *kapu* chief, possessor of greatest *mana*. Nor could the *kapu* chief risk letting his shadow fall on anyone else, lest its tremendous *mana* destroy or harm him. One of the slave caste (*kauwā*) could not let his shadow fall on anyone who was not *kauwā*, for some people considered his *mana* repulsive. Others thought the *kauwā* had no *mana* at all, and the touch of such a shadow was an insult.

*Nānā I Ke Kumu, NKK1 p.10*

Violation of *kapu* was not treated lightly. Some breaches of *kapu* were regarded as an encroachment upon or even the theft of *mana*. Some infringements were punishable by death; others resulted in automatic punishment, such as illness:

Illness was often thought to be punishment sent from an offended 'aumakua. Breaking food *kapus*, bathing in pools that were *kapu*, violating the *kapus* of the menstrual period – all these could bring reprimands in the form of physical discomfort. So could behaviour that impaired interpersonal relationships – greed, dishonesty, theft. Often there were 'diagnostic clues'. A swollen hand pained a thief until he made restitution. A sore foot told of 'going where you were not supposed to be'. An agony of pain in the scrotum betrayed the flagrantly unfaithful man. Psychosomatic ills were not limited to Western civilization.

*Nānā I Ke Kumu, NKK1 p.38*

The *kapu* system was not always so far-reaching. According to Hawaiian history, in more ancient times life was easier and more free flowing. It was the Tahitian *kahuna* Pā‘ao, during the 1200s, who inaugurated a change in the system:

The *kapu* that was in force in old Hawaii seems to have undergone major changes with the arrival of the Tahitian priest Pā‘ao in the 1200s. Originally, *kapu* were far less severe and complex and, thus, were easier to follow. Most related solely to the deities. Commoners and chiefs freely mingled, and the temples were open to both men and women.

This changed. Gone were the days of easy living; *kapu* multiplied and increased to the extent that life became perilous, for it was difficult for word of each of these new *kapu* to reach all persons. Many fled to the *pu‘uhonua* (place of refuge) after discovering that they’d unwittingly broken a *kapu*.

Cruel chiefs ordered cruel or meaningless *kapu*, such as the one that required all canoes to lower their sails while travelling near the specific shore of an island. Fortunately, such chiefs were few, and Hawaiian history recounts tales of unjust chiefs being put to death by outraged people.

*Scott Cunningham, Hawaiian Religion & Magic, HRMC p.74*

When Europeans began to visit the Hawaiian Islands, following their ‘discovery’ by Captain James Cook in 1778, the islanders were quick to notice that the crews of the whaling and exploring vessels that anchored in the islands’ many bays were completely free in their behaviour, breaking many rules of *kapu* without being subject to any ills.

From this time onward, through such observation and under the influence of Christian missionaries, the *kapu* system was exposed to steady erosion. Overtly, the tradition ended quite abruptly when, in 1819, King Kamehameha II (c. 1797–1824), persuaded by his late father’s favourite wife, Queen Ka‘ahumanu, deliberately sat down to eat with her and his mother Keōpūolani, thus breaking one of the oldest *kapus* of all. With this one symbolic act, the king, who had converted to Christianity, brought to an end the rigorous *kapu* system that had been in place for several centuries, and word passed rapidly among the islands that the *kapu* system had been abolished.

The king’s conversion ushered in a new era in Hawaiian religion. Temples of the old religion were destroyed, images of deities were burnt, official religious ceremonies ended. People, however, do not so easily relinquish established and traditional ways and, in private, the *kāhuna* continued to perform traditional rites, people still invoked the old ‘*aumākua*, and craftsmen and workers still honoured the *akua* (ancestor deities) associated with their professions.<sup>1</sup>

See also: **kapu kai**, **tapu**.

1. Scott Cunningham, *Hawaiian Religion & Magic*, HRMC p.75.

**kapu kai** (Hw) *Lit.* taboo (*kapu*) sea (*kai*); a purifying sea bath. *Kai* means the sea, sea water, or the seaside. A *kapu kai* is a Hawaiian ritual bath in the sea to purify oneself after evil or defilement, physical or spiritual, and to remove the taboo that accompanied it.

A *kahuna* (shaman), after curing someone of an ailment, would traditionally go to the sea to soak in the ocean salt water. This would ‘*oki*’ (remove) from the *kahuna* the *pilikia* (trouble) that caused the sickness or disturbance and sever any *aka* (shadow) cords that tied the *kahuna* to the sick patient. *Aka* cords are invisible and extensible ‘strings’ of energy that keep people attached to others, and to objects or places – the thicker the cord, the stronger the attachment. The *kapu kai* was performed alone and involved *pule* (prayers) to the ‘*aumākua*’ (gods, ancestors) for help. It was one of a number of rituals, collectively known as *pani*, used for ‘closing off’ something. According to *Nānā I Ke Kumu* (‘Look to the Source’), a modern compendium of Hawaiian lore:

The medical *kahuna* took human nature into account when he ended every course of treatment with the ritual finale called *pani*. The word itself means to ‘close’ or ‘shut’. Thus, the *pani* that ended medical treatment ‘closed’ the episode; ‘shut off’ illness from the recovered patient.

*Pani* after illness might be the ceremonial sea bath called *kapu kai*; or, either *kahuna* or patient, wearing a *lei* (garland), might walk into the sea. As the waves washed the *lei* off him and away to open waters, so the last vestige of illness was also washed away.

Very often, *pani* was the ceremonial preparation and eating of a food with symbolic significance. It might be the *kala* fish or *kala* seaweed, for the name *ka* meant to ‘free’ or ‘release’.

*Nānā I Ke Kumu*, NKK2 p.156

**karā** (H/Pu) *Lit.* a bracelet; a steel bracelet worn by many Sikh men; one of the five external signs of a follower of the Sikh religion. See **panj kakkā**.

**karakia** (Mo) *Lit.* incantation, chant, formula; ritual invocation; charm, spell; also, to recite or repeat such chants as a key aspect of religious rites, prayers, or meditation; incantations used to invoke the *mana* (spiritual power) of the

*atua* (ancestor deities), or to aid magical practices, black or white. Some long recitations of ancient *karakia* were performed using a *tokotauwaka*, a stick into which notches had been cut as an *aide-mémoire* to the various sections of the *karakia*.

*Karakia* intoned by officiating priestly adepts (*tohunga*) or elders (*kaumātua*) are used to increase *mana* or power and to render things *tapu* (sacred, restricted). A *karakia* is also recited to lift or neutralize a *tapu*, and make something or someone once again *noa* (common, ordinary, normal, safe). By means of *karakia*, a *tohunga* is able to influence both people and events. But the power lies in the mind of the *tohunga*, as explained by the contemporary writer Samuel Timoti Robinson of the Kāi Tahu, the principal tribe of New Zealand's South Island:

The *karakia* of the *tohunga* has the ability to heal, bewitch, and charm a person. With *karakia*, we can control the weather and cause landslides to occur. The power (*mana*) is not in the mere words of the prayer (*karakia*). The power lies in the skill of the operator and in the *mana* of the *atua*. The skill of self-control was developed in the disciplines of stance, breath and mind control during the training of an *akoako* (student). After mastery of the three disciplines, one was ready to say *karakia* with power.

There are two main types of *karakia*: those said from the heart, and the ancient set recitations which can be done with the *tokotauwaka* (godstick).

Every *karakia* had its power in the *wairua* or spirit, be it the spirit of the ancestors, the spirit of the gods, or the spirit of self. The *wairua* (spirit) of Hawaiki (Hawaii, ancestral material and spiritual homeland) is ancient and transcends time.

The *atua* are full of *mana*, their origin is in *Te Pō*, the Darkness, where life was ever potential. *Io* is the source of their *mana*, yet each of them came from this source. The *mana* of the *atua* is the divided *mana* of *Io*, as they each have their own potential, just as *Io* appointed them separately over the elements. . . . *Io* has the greatest *mana* and the *karakia* for *Io* are the most *tapu*.

*Samuel Timoti Robinson, Tohunga, TRAK p.108*

According to Māori belief, *karakia* were given to man by *Io* the Supreme Being. Māori mythology relates the story of how *Io* bestowed the *kete tuauri* (basket of knowledge of *karakia*) upon the deity *Tāne* to take back to mankind. The purpose of this 'basket' was so that human beings could control all things connected with *Rangi* (Sky Father) and *Papatūānuku* (Earth Mother) in the realms of duality, and could control all the actions of their offspring, the *atua* who control the elements (wind, rain, mist, thunder, *etc.*).

In earlier times, if a teacher began to abandon and dilute the ancient lore and teach his own ideas, he would be put to death to prevent the falsification of history and doctrine. Knowledge of the ancient *karakia* remained within the inner circle of *kaumātua* (elders) and *tohunga*, and was only imparted at initiation into the *Io* tradition. The name of *Io* is considered too sacred to mention or discuss openly, however, and these sacred *karakia* were not generally known by the modern Māori. Robinson reversed this tradition when he published his book *Tohunga* in 2005.

Recitation of *karakia* must be word perfect and repeated in one breath. If the incantation is lengthy, it is undertaken by two people, the one taking it up where the first leaves off. Omitting or shifting a word, making an error or breaking a recital is considered a bad omen, mitigated by going back and immediately repeating the correct version to avoid a speedy death.

When performing *karakia*, certain protocols are strictly adhered to in order to protect the common people from the power engendered by the *karakia*:

“*E noho! Koi takahia te karakia* (Sit down! Lest you interfere with the invocations).” For there is danger in being abroad at such a time, the person’s spirit may be affected by the sacred and potent incantations, and hence its physical basis be in grave danger. Also for a *noa* (common) person to approach *tapu* persons engaged in religious rites might be productive of serious results to the latter.

*Elsdon Best, “Lore of the Whare-kohanga,” LWK3 pp.147–48*

In the oral tradition of the ancient Māori, all knowledge and information that was deemed important or held dear was preserved in these recitations. Among the many *karakia*, for instance, is a group that recounts the stages of creation and the genealogy of the gods. These chants were added to the ancient and lengthy lineages of prominent Māori families and tribes. Regarding themselves as descendants of *Io* the Most Supreme and of the gods, the *mana* (power) of their ancestry is brought through to the present by reciting a *karakia* of their genealogy:

The *mana* within the genealogy chants (*karakia*) is a living fire and the words of the chants are an ancient fire that never dies. The sounds of the words make a fire in the realm of the spirit. Thus the tool (*toko-tauwaka*, notched stick) gains power when used over time because the *mana* of the creation chants becomes stored up in it.

*Samuel Timoti Robinson, Tohunga, TRAK p.113*

Another category of *karakia* invokes the power of the gods. These *karakia* are for healing, protection and blessing and for everyday activities such as gathering medicinal herbs, opening and closing meetings, blessing houses,

planting crops, cooking food and lifting a *tapu* from tools before wood carving, tattooing, cutting hair, etc.

At a deeper spiritual level, *karakia* are ancient formulae or incantations, carefully preserved and handed down by *tohunga-ahurewa* (altar adepts), initiates of the highest level of the *Io* tradition. *Io* is the supreme Being, and among the most sacred *karakia* are: the *Karakia ka Ikoa a Io*, which lists the sacred names of *Io* the Most Supreme; the *Karakia ka Ikoa Tau*, which recounts the sacred names of the ages of creation; and *Te Aka Rangi*, which relates the story of the manifestation of the creation through the creative proliferation of the cosmic vine (*te aka*).

The *tohunga-ahurewa* bound (*te uru*) or joined together these three most sacred *karakia* in the ceremony of *Te Uru ō te Karakia*, in which all three chants were repeated one after the other, while the *tohunga* meditated on the meaning. Robinson says that the more advanced among them also contacted the *mana* that descends from the spiritual realms, and thus ascended the cosmic vine (*te aka*) towards the Divine:

Gradually the exercises would take the *tohunga* far up to the higher realm of *Io*, just as *Tāne* obtained the baskets of knowledge. This is nothing new to the *tohunga* tradition.

*Samuel Timoti Robinson, Tohunga, TRAK p.104*

No ceremony begins without the invocation (*karakia*) of one's *wairua* (spirit) and the *atua*, from whom comes the ancestral *mana*:

The *tohunga* ascends the macrocosm by *karakia* and contacts the higher powers by naming the *atua*, ancestors or Hawaiki in his rites. At any time when we call on the aid of the *wairua*, we ascend the macrocosm. Our minds transcend our mundane level and reach out towards superior powers that are beyond our reckoning. Then, when we apply this *karakia* to the physical level, such as when calling *Rangi* (Sky Father) to bless a child, the heavenly powers are brought down into our level in *te ao mārama* (the world of life and light, this world)....

To join the *karakia* to Hawaiki, the prayer has the added *mana* (power) of the 'source'. The prayers become empowered by ancestral *mana*. Instead of having our individual power the Māori has the power of everyone before him in his *whakapapa* (genealogy). Because Hawaiki is ancient, when we address its name in prayer we find power. Hawaiki becomes more than a place of power. It enters into all of the various prayers of the *tohunga* and by invoking it we also transcend time. We travel back to the power of the ancient Māori.

*Samuel Timoti Robinson, Tohunga, TRAK p.109*



*Karakia* are described by some of the early New Zealand anthropologists and ethnographers. In conversation with the journalist and ethnographer Herries Beattie (1881–1972), the Māori elder Teone Taare Tikao of Rapaki relates:

All repetition of *karakia* had to be done extremely carefully as it was ‘very easy to step over the line’, and then disaster followed. The rendering had to be word-perfect on every occasion, and sometime it was accompanied by certain observances, and the whole had to be done solemnly and reverently if it was to be successful.

*Herries Beattie, Tikao Talks, TTTT p.73*

Elsdon Best (1856–1931), most of whose information came from the Tūhoe tribe (*iwi*) of the eastern North Island, similarly records:

When reciting any *karakia* of importance, such as those pertaining to black magic, it was considered highly necessary that the charm, incantation or invocation be rendered in a faultless manner. Should any error be made in the repetition, the omission of a word for example, then the charm was powerless to effect the desired purpose; not only so but the error recoiled as it were with the probable result of the death of the reciter.

*Elsdon Best, Maori Religion and Mythology, MRM2 p.110*

These effusions are remarkable productions; they are ancient chants (*karakia*) couched in exceedingly archaic language and are, moreover, often true invocations, a rare occurrence in Māori ritual. Such ritual was employed only on what were deemed important occasions, such as the birth, sickness or death of a person of rank, the opening of the *tapu* (sacred) school of learning, the installation of the medium of a god, or any serious calamity threatening the tribe.

It is interesting to note that no form of offering or sacrifice was made to *Io*, that no image of Him was ever made, and that He had no *āhua*, or form of incarnation, such as inferior gods had.

*Elsdon Best, Some Aspects of Maori Myth and Religion, AMMB p.25*

Walter Gudgeon (1841–1920) maintains that some *karakia* were the possession of individual lineages of *tohunga*:

The *karakias* were moreover the personal property of the *tohunga* and his disciples, and in many cases were known only to them, therefore, the services of the *tohunga* had a real market value in the eyes of the tribe, so long as there was no doubt as to the efficacy of

his *karakia*, which same depended very much on the personal *mana* of the *tohunga*.

Walter Gudgeon, "Tohunga Māori," TMG p.64

*Karakia* are used in all aspects of Māori socio-religious life, more especially by earlier Māori than in present times. They would use them in order to carry out their activities in union with *Io*, or in harmony with the powers of the *atua*, or even in conjunction with useful malevolent spirits.

At a worldly level, every important matter or event in traditional Māori life was attended by appropriate *karakia* and associated rites – at major social occasions as well as normal daily activities. There were *karakia* rituals for the blessing of a child, the making and launching of a *waka* (canoe, boat), the planting of *kūmara* (sweet potatoes), and protection from adversity. *Karakia* rituals dispatched the dead, controlled the weather, the ocean and the elements, and addressed sickness. *Karakia* were also used in witchcraft for casting curses and spells, or for protection from them. Their use extended to infusing power into charms, stones and so on, for a variety of purposes including black magic. Wars and battles were often fought through the intermediary of the *karakia* and *mana* of the *tohunga* who represented the opposing parties. In the hands of a priestly *tohunga*, *karakia* were the means of tapping into the *mana* of the subtle realms to manifest that power in the physical dimension, and thus effect a particular outcome:

With the (old) Māori there was no one special day, no Sunday on which *tapu* must be particularly observed; one day was as another; it was a perpetual Sabbath; that is, the Māori's religion was his daily life; and in this respect the Māori was one of the most religious of men. Almost immediately he was born, his ceremonial existence began.

There were ceremonies with *karakia* (ritual chants) at his naming; at his dedication to the gods; at the time of his entering the ranks of the warriors; before going on the warpath, continually during the time of war, and after returning; at his death; at the scraping of his bones. No important house was built without ceremonies and *karakia*; no canoe was fashioned without them, even no tree felled for the canoe without them; no fishing was undertaken without them, no hunting. Before going on the warpath the individual warrior would chant a private *karakia* over his weapon; the wise man was continually repeating *karakia* to avert possible witchcraft; the traveller repeated them to lessen the length of his journey and minimize its dangers. He was kept fully aware, not only of the existence of the gods (*atua*), but also of their constant proximity, of their participation in every affair of his life. And the reason for the *karakia* being addressed to them, and for their taking the interest they did in the individual person as in

the tribe, was that every member of the tribe was, through long lines of ancestors, directly descended from those same gods. That was the Māori's pride of ancestry, and his genealogies were kept meticulously, his often-checked memory being his Brett, and his *tohungas* being his College of Heraldry. *Noblesse oblige* was no empty phrase to him; through *Tāne*, creator and impregnator of man, he was literally descended from the gods.

Johannes Andersen, "Maori Religion," *MRJA* p.519

The *karakia* of ancient Māori was not the equivalent of *Pākehā* (European, foreigners') prayers, but was a direct address to the gods, without supplication, a kind of unabashed petition for a favour, or in some cases for a charm or spell to accomplish some particular purpose. The choice of *karakia* depended on the occasion or what was wanted at the time. If it was the seed-planting season, the *tohunga* (priest) would *karakia* the gods concerned to request a successful year and a good yield. The *tohunga* could chant to the sun to decrease or increase its heat as desired. He could chant to the moon – which was thought to send cold weather and storms, and also to lessen the heat of the sun to a certain extent – and ask it to restrain the storms or to decrease the rainfall:

The Māori of old did not pray to his *atua* as we understand the term 'pray'. His *karakia* (usually described as prayers) were but incantations or, in some cases, invocations.

Elsdon Best, "Spiritual Concepts of the Maori," *SCM2* p.176

*Karakia* (is) a word that is often improperly rendered by the English word 'prayer'. I am moved to make this remark by the fact that there is really no element of supplication in a Māori *karakia*. The gods of that people would very properly despise a man who abased himself before them, but they were at all times prepared to do their duty towards mankind, if compelled thereto by a man who possessed the requisite *mana* – hence the value of a first-class *tohunga*.

Walter Gudgeon, "Tohunga Māori," *TMG* p.63

See also: **initiation (in Māori tradition)** (7.4), **kete wānanga** (8.1), **mana** (Māori) (7.3), **Te Uru ō te Karakia, tohunga** (7.1), **tokotauwaka**.

**karam dharam** (H/Pu) *Lit.* religious (*dharam*) observances (*karam*); rituals and ceremonies; religious deeds and duties; religious observances and moral code; rites, rituals and sacrifices prescribed by ancient Indian scriptures; often simply as *karma*, where the context implies rituals.

Since Indian people have generally placed considerable reliance on religious rites and rituals, especially as prescribed in the *Vedas* and other sacred texts, mystics have generally thought it of value to point out that such practices will not lead a soul out of this world:

Those who try to do things by their own efforts  
are drowned in the terrifying world-ocean (*bhav sāgar*);  
They cannot cross over.  
Those who practise religious rituals (*karam dharam*)  
and strict self-discipline (*sanjam*) –  
Their egotistical pride shall consume their minds.

*Kabīr, Ādi Granth 335, AGK*

In Hindu tradition, it is believed that the observance of rituals and ceremonies earns great merit (S/H. *punya*, Pu. *punn*), resulting in a stay in heaven after death. But the mystics say:

Religious ceremonies (*karam dharam*) are all entanglements:  
*pāp* (sin, evil) and *punn* (merit, virtue) are bound up with them.

*Guru Amardās, Ādi Granth 551, MMS*

Outward observances are rarely performed without a desire to earn the approval of others. Such display has its own consequence, creating bondage to the realm of birth and death:

The display of good deeds and a show of piety (*karam dharam*)  
are subject to being taxed by *Yama* (*Jam*, Messenger of Death).

*Guru Arjun, Ādi Granth 747, AGK*

According to such mystics, all the spiritual benefits believed to accrue from religious observances can be obtained through the practice of inner contact with the divine creative power (*Shabd*). Guru Nānak says that the merit of religious observances (*karam dharam*), purification rituals (*such*), self-discipline (*sanjam*), recitation of holy texts (*jap*), penance (*tap*), and pilgrimage (*tirath*) – “all these abide in the *Shabd*.”<sup>1</sup>

None of this is a new perspective. Even in the Hindu epic, the *Mahābhārata*, it says, “Just as one who gets water from the river attaches no importance to a well, so the wise attach no importance to rituals (*karma*).”<sup>2</sup>

See also: **karma-kāṇḍa**.

1. Guru Nānak, *Ādi Granth* 1332, AGK.
2. *Mahābhārata* 12, *Shāntiparva* 241, MV9 p.201.

**karm(a), karman** (S/H) *Lit.* action, work, deeds; observances, rituals, ceremonies. The Sanskrit *karman* appears as *karma* in many compound words, and is commonly rendered as *karma*. As a metaphysical term, *karma* refers to the actions and reactions which arise from past thoughts, words, deeds, and desires. *Karma* also includes the debits and credits resulting from past deeds that bring a soul back to the world in future lives in order to reap their fruit.

In ancient Vedic literature, *karma* generally refers to various religious practices (*karmānushṭhāna*), including sacrifices performed with the intention of gaining merit (*punya*) by pleasing the gods. Later on, *karma* came to mean acts of charity and penance, the practice becoming known as *karma-mārga* (the path of virtuous actions) and associated with the rule of *dharma* (religious and moral duty). From there, it developed into an ethical doctrine associated with an understanding of the fruits of actions (*karma-phala*). It was only later on that the term came to be associated with the doctrine of transmigration and the bondage of *karma* (*karma-bandhana*).

In Jainism, some *Digambara* teachers,<sup>1</sup> such as the ninth-century Jinasena, prescribe six *karmas* or daily duties for the laity, as a substitute for the more stringent six *āvaśhyakas* recommended for mendicant monks. These are:

1. *Deva pūjā*. Worship (*pūjā*) of divine beings (*devas*); worship of the *Tīrthankaras* and *arahantas*, the progenitors and enlightened ones of Jainism. This includes recitation of the *Chaturviṃśati Stava*, meaning ‘Praise (*stava*) of the Twenty-Four (*chaturviṃśati*)’ *Tīrthankaras*; elements of *sāmāyika* (tranquillity); and *guru-vandana* (reverence of *gurus*), which comprise three of the *āvaśhyakas*. *Guru-vandana* is ritualized reverence (*vandana*) of *arahantas* (enlightened ones), *siddhas* (perfected and liberated ones), and *āchāryas* (teachers).
2. *Vārtta*. Livelihood; a livelihood that conforms to Jain ethical principles, especially honesty and causing no harm (*ahiṃsā*) to other living beings. This is sometimes replaced in the various lists of the six *karmas* by *guru-upāsti* or *guru-bhakti* – adoration of and devotion to the *gurus* or *āchāryas*, and is equivalent to the *āvaśhyaka* of *guru-vandana*.
3. *Svādhyāya*. One’s own (*sva*) study (*adhyāya*); study of the scriptures.
4. *Samyama*. Self-restraint; control of the mind and its predilection for running to the five senses; specifically, giving up certain items of enjoyment in order to practise willpower and self-control; observance of the five minor vows (*aṇuvratas*) of a layperson.
5. *Tapas*. Austerities, which include three of the six *āvaśhyakas* – *pratikramaṇa* (a rite of confession), *pratyākhyāna* (renunciation), and *kāyotsarga* (abandonment of the body, *i.e.* meditation).

6. *Dāna*. Charity, almsgiving, which can be of food, knowledge, medicine, or protection.

See also: **āvashyaka**, **dāna** (►4), **karma** (6.3), **pūjā**, **svādhyāya** (►4), **tapas**.

1. Jinasena, *Ādi Purāṇa* 38:34, *APIJ*; Chāmuṇḍarāya, *Chāritrasāra*, *CSCM* p.21; in *JYMS* p.185.

**karma-kāṇḍ(a)** (S/H) *Lit.* observances (*karma*) part (*kāṇḍa*); ritualistic portion, ceremonial section; rites and rituals; traditional Hindu ceremonies and outward observances, including social, moral, and ethical conduct; also, that part of the *Vedas* (the *Brāhmaṇas* and *Samhitās*) that deals with rites, rituals and sacrifices, and the merit arising from their performance, as contrasted with the *jñāna-kāṇḍa* (knowledge portion), the esoteric knowledge set out in the *Upanishads*, which contain an exposition of the knowledge of *Brahman* and the real *Ātman* (Self, Soul); hence, *karma-kāṇḍī*, one who dogmatically adheres to external religious rites and rituals.

Included among the six traditional schools of Indian philosophy are *Pūrva Mīmāṃsā* ('earlier enquiry', also called *Mīmāṃsā*) and *Uttara Mīmāṃsā* ('last enquiry', also called *Vedānta*). The former is regarded as *karma-kāṇḍa*, the latter as *jñāna-kāṇḍa*.

*Karma-kāṇḍa* is also the name of the second part of the Jain text, the *Gommaṣasāra*, which is an explanation of the short *Dravya Saṃgraha*, both works attributed to Nemichandra (c.C11th–12th). The *Karma-kāṇḍa* of Nemichandra deals with sin and evil, enumerating the one hundred and forty-eight forms of *karma*, according to Jain understanding.

The outer aspects of religion may vary, changing from culture to culture, according to the climate, local conditions and social customs, and also with the passage of time. But the underlying spiritual values, common to all religions, are much the same and never change. God is within all men, educated or unlettered, and whatever their social circumstances. The moral aspects of life: honesty and dishonesty, kindness and ill will, and all other aspects of goodness and evil are recognized in all human societies. Unlike social and religious customs, these are not the invention of man, but are an intrinsic part of nature, prevalent in all cultures and in all ages.

Swami Vivekananda explains:

The *Vedas* are divided into two portions, the *jñāna-kāṇḍa* and the *karma-kāṇḍa*. The ceremonies and the fruits of the *karma-kāṇḍa* are confined within the limits of the world of *māyā* (illusion), and therefore they have been undergoing and will undergo transformation according to the law of change which operates through time, space,

and personality. Social laws and customs, likewise, being based on this *karma-kāṇḍa*, have been changing, and will continue to change hereafter. . . . It is the *jñāna-kāṇḍa* or the *Vedānta* only that has for all time commanded recognition for leading men across *māyā* and bestowing salvation on them through the practice of *yoga*, *bhakti*, *jñāna*, or selfless work; and its validity and authority remain unaffected by any limitations of time, place or persons. . . .

All external forms of prayer and worship are included in the *karma-kāṇḍa*. These are good when performed in a spirit of unselfishness and not allowed to degenerate into mere formality. They purify the heart. . . .

There was a time in India when the *karma-kāṇḍa* had its sway. There are many grand ideals, no doubt, in that portion of the *Vedas*. Some of our present daily worship is still according to the precepts of the *karma-kāṇḍa*. But with all that, the *karma-kāṇḍa* of the *Vedas* has almost disappeared from India. Very little of our life today is bound and regulated by the orders of the *karma-kāṇḍa* of the *Vedas*. . . . (Even so,) the main ideas of the *karma-kāṇḍa*, which consists of the duties of man, the duties of the student, of the householder, of the recluse, and the various duties of the different stations of life are followed more or less down to the present day. . . .

The *jñāna-kāṇḍa* of the *Vedas* is a vast ocean; many lives are necessary to understand even a little of it. Truly has it been said of the *Upanishads* by Rāmānuja that they form the head, the shoulders, the crest of the *Vedas*, and surely enough the *Upanishads* have become the Bible of modern India. The Hindus have the greatest respect for the *karma-kāṇḍa* of the *Vedas*, but, for all practical purposes, we know that for ages by *shruti* (revelation) has been meant the *Upanishads*, and the *Upanishads* alone. We know that all our great philosophers, whether Vyāsa, Patañjali or Gautama (Buddha), and even the father of all philosophy, the great Kapila himself, whenever they wanted an authority for what they wrote, everyone of them found it in the *Upanishads*, and nowhere else, for therein are the truths that remain forever.

There are truths that are true only in a certain line, in a certain direction, under certain circumstances, and for certain times – those that are founded on the institutions of the times. There are other truths which are based on the nature of man himself, and which must endure so long as man himself endures. These are the truths that alone can be universal, and in spite of all the changes that have come to India, as to our social surroundings, our methods of dress, our manner of eating, our modes of worship – these universal truths of the *shrutis*, the marvellous Vedantic ideas, stand out in their own sublimity, immovable, unvanquishable, deathless, and immortal. Yet the germs of all the ideas that were developed in the *Upanishads* had been taught

already in the *karma-kāṇḍa*. The idea of the cosmos which all sects of Vedantists had to take for granted, the psychology which has formed the common basis of all the Indian schools of thought, had there been worked out already and presented before the world.

*Swami Vivekananda, Various Talks, CWSV6 pp.182–83,  
CWSV8 p.25, CWSV3 pp.393, 324, 119, 394–95*

Indian saints have commonly observed that external religious observances will not lead to salvation. They say that it is incorrect to think that anything spiritual can be gained from such practices. In fact, feeling that the rituals of religion are essential to life and must be performed correctly, whatever the underlying motive, can involve a person so much that the real search for God is forgotten. As Swami Shiv Dayal Singh observes:

*Kāl* ('Time', 'Death') has deceived all men,  
and kept them away from the fourth stage.  
He has kept them clueless about the merciful God (*Dayāl Purush*),  
and entangled the soul in rites and rituals (*karm-kāṇḍ*).

*Swami Shiv Dayal Singh, Sār Bachan Poetry 38:11.6–7, SBP p.349*

See also: **karam dharam**.

**karwat** (H/Pu) See **Kāshī karvat**.

**Kāshī karvat, Kāshī karwat** (H/Pu) *Lit.* the saw (*karvat*) of Kāshī (now Vārāṇasī); a huge saw previously situated in the Kāshī Karvat Manmandir (temple) since medieval times. The priests in charge claimed that anyone submitting himself to be sawn in half would attain salvation. Money was first given to the priests, and many *rājas* and wealthy people sacrificed their lives in this way, leaving their fortunes to the priests. The practice was stopped by the British during the nineteenth century.

This gruesome ritual graphically demonstrates the power of unfounded and traditional belief over the mind. The horror of such a death is not hard to imagine; and that people could believe in such traditions, and that the priests could be so blind to their own folly and cruelty is difficult to comprehend. Yet perhaps more people have been killed in the name of religion than in any other cause.

It also demonstrates what can happen when people are unaware of the basic spiritual fundamentals of life: the soul as the primary unit of life and being, the true nature of salvation, the purpose and uniqueness of human life, the law of *karma* and the cycle of birth and death – and so on.



Mystics, as well as humanitarian social reformers, have spoken out against the custom. Saints have all pointed out that to punish the body for the waywardness of the mind is not only a waste of time, but panders to the mind itself. Guru Arjun is forthright in his opinion:

They read scriptures,  
and contemplate the *Vedas*;  
They practise the cleansing techniques of *yoga*,  
and control of the *bhuangam* (i.e. *kuṇḍalinī*).  
But they cannot escape from the company of the five passions:  
they are increasingly bound to egotism.  
O beloved, this is not the way to meet the Lord;  
I have performed these rituals so many times.  
I have collapsed, exhausted, at the door of my lord master;  
I pray that he may grant me a discerning intellect.

One may remain silent and use his hands as begging bowls,  
and wander naked in the forest.  
He may make pilgrimages to river banks  
and sacred shrines all over the world,  
but his sense of duality will not leave him.

His mind's desires may lead him to go  
and dwell at sacred places of pilgrimage (*tīrath*),  
and offer his head to the *karwat*;  
But this will not cause the filth of his mind to depart,  
even though he may make thousands of efforts.

He may give gifts of all sorts – gold, women, horses, and elephants.  
He may make offerings of corn, clothes and land in abundance,  
but this will not lead him to the Lord's door (*duārā*).

He may remain devoted to worship and adoration,  
bowing his forehead to the floor,  
practising the six religious rituals (*khaṭ karmas*).  
He indulges in egotism and pride, and falls into entanglements,  
but he does not meet the Lord by these devices.

He practises the eighty-four postures of *yoga*,  
and acquires the supernatural powers of the *siddhas*,  
but he gets tired of practising these.  
He lives a long life, but is reincarnated again and again:  
he has not met with the Lord.

He may enjoy princely pleasures, and regal pomp and ceremony,  
and issue unchallenged commands.  
He may lie on beautiful beds, perfumed with sandalwood oil,  
but this will lead him only to the gates of the most horrible hell.

*Har kīrat* in the *sādh sangat* (company of the saints)  
is the highest of all *karmas* (practices).  
Says Nānak, he alone obtains it,  
who is predestined to receive it.

*Guru Arjun, Ādi Granth 641–42, AGK*

In this context, *Har kīrat* or *Har kīrtan* implies listening the divine music of the Word, frequently depicted in the *Ādi Granth* as the most effective way of finding God.

**kaṭhina** (S/Pa) *Lit.* hard, firm, stiff; a pole or frame for supporting burdens; in Buddhism, the wooden frame on which donated robe cloth is spread for cutting and making; also, the cotton cloth donated for making robes; also, the *Theravāda* ceremony in which robes or robe cloth given by the laity in gratitude to the monks for their teaching of the *Dhamma* (S. *Dharma*) is distributed among the monks. Although, literally, *kaṭhina* means the wooden frame on which the donated robe cloth is spread, it has become synonymous with the cloth itself, as well as the ceremony. The custom is believed to have been prevalent among other ascetic groups that existed in the Buddha's time, particularly the Jains.

The *kaṭhina* ceremony takes place at the end of the rainy-season retreat (*vassa*). In India, this follows the full moon of the eleventh lunar month, which usually falls in October or November. However, the timing of the rainy season and of the subsequent *kaṭhina* can vary according to the country. About three metres of cloth are required for a single robe.

In India, where the *kaṭhina* tradition began, the rainy season can last four months, though the retreat is only for three. According to the *Mahāvagga* section of the *Vinaya Piṭaka* (code of monastic discipline), a monk is free to choose whether his three-month retreat will be during the first or the last of the three months.<sup>1</sup> Nowadays, especially outside India, although customs vary, the rains retreat is generally for a fixed three-month period. After the retreat, monks may follow an itinerant lifestyle or go to another monastery. The fourth month after the start of the retreat is consequently a time of coming and going, and also (in cooler areas of the northern hemisphere) a time of taking stock of winter needs.

It is stipulated in the *Vinaya* that monks should lead lives of poverty and should not solicit gifts. Consequently, the day on which the *kaṭhina* ceremony

is to be held is decided by the laity. This is organized well in advance, in consultation with the abbot of the monastery. The work of organizing the next festival may begin soon after the previous year's *kaṭhina* has ended.

The *kaṭhina* ceremony is one of the principle Buddhist festivals in *Theravāda* countries, where its overall manner of celebration is largely similar. The main event consists of offerings of robe cloth made to the monastic community by the laity. Large numbers of people may attend, and crowds can start to gather from the early morning. At mid-morning, a meal is served to the monks, following which the visitors are also invited to share in the meal. The ceremony of presenting the robe cloth takes place in the afternoon, at which one or more monks are selected to receive the gifts. Although the primary and traditional intention is the donation of robe cloth, other items are also given, such as socks, implements, and winter fuel.

Traditionally, the monks would then decide which individuals (one or more) would receive the robe cloth. Only those monks who had correctly observed the *vassa* during the earlier of the three months would be eligible. Once this decision had been made, the monks had to cut and sew the cloth on the same day into one of the three kinds of acceptable robe. This was a group effort, continuing for much of the night, and conducted in a mindful and focused manner, with many of the stages being accompanied by ritualized and formulaic verbal exchanges. When complete, the robe was presented to the selected monk or monks. In the past, the cloth presented was white and also needed dyeing; nowadays, the cloth is invariably pre-dyed to the correct colour.

In practice, depending on the size of the local community, a large number of ready-made robes as well as a considerable quantity of cloth are presented to the monks, and are then shared out according to need. A monk is only permitted to own three robes, which can soon become worn and torn. Excess food and other items are generally given to those in need – a common practice at many Buddhist temples at all times of the year. There are also other variations relating to local circumstances, and the *Vinaya* itself, in various places, contains multiple rules and stipulations regarding the preparation and making of the robes, and so on.<sup>2</sup>

The story associated with the origins of the *kaṭhina* is related in the *Vinaya*.<sup>3</sup> A party of around thirty “forest-dwelling monks, all living on alms, all dressed in rags from the rubbish heap, all having only three robes each,” are on their way to pass the rainy-season retreat with the Buddha, but are unable to reach their destination by the time it comes to start the retreat. They therefore spend the period of *vassa* “in discomfort, thinking, ‘Our Blessed One is staying near us, six leagues from here, and we are unable to visit him.’” When the three months are over, they make their way to the Buddha, before the rains have ended, and arrive “drenched and weary”. The Buddha asks after their welfare and the conduct of their retreat, and they explain what has happened. On hearing their story, the Buddha declares the details of the

*kaṭhina* ceremony to be held in the future, first specifying five concessions to those who completed it:

And five things are allowable to you, O *bhikkhus*, after the *kaṭhina* ceremony has been held: going for alms to the houses of people who have not invited you; going for alms without wearing the usual set of three robes; going for alms in a group of four or more; possessing as many robes as are wanted; and whatever number of robes shall have come to hand, those shall belong to them (*i.e.* to the *bhikkhus* entitled, by residence or otherwise, to share in the distribution).

*Vinaya Piṭaka, Mahāvagga 7, PTSV3 p.254, VTP2 pp.150–51*

He then outlines the procedure that has become the basis of the *kaṭhina* ceremony, and details the circumstances under which it should be considered invalid. In essence, this is when the robes have not been completed before the end of the night or when they have been made incorrectly or incompletely, according to various criteria. Considerable detail is provided as to what constitutes the correct method of making a robe. The Buddha then stipulates the conditions for the *kaṭhina* ceremony to be regarded as acceptable. Interestingly, these conditions include, “When the robes have been made out of new cotton cloth, or as good as new, or out of old cloth, or out of rags taken from the rubbish heap, or out of odd bits picked up in the bazaar (*i.e.* offcuts).” Modern custom generally stipulates the provision of good quality fabric.

There are also eight reasons why a monk who has completed the *kaṭhina* ceremony should lose the concessions, and there are rituals associated with the forfeiture. These include absence from the monastery without permission, not making the robe, loss of the robe, and so on.

As in all spiritual traditions, there is a tendency for the spiritual essence to become increasingly overlaid by external concerns. Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, in his extraordinarily popular and iconoclastic *Handbook for Mankind*, based on lectures given in 1956, points out many areas where he feels that Buddhism has gone beyond what the Buddha actually taught. Among these is the evolution of the *kaṭhina* ceremony:

The *Dhamma*, the genuine teaching that once was paramount has become so overlaid by ceremonial that the whole objective of Buddhism has been obscured, falsified, and changed. Ordination, for instance, has become a face-saving gambit for young men whom people have been pointing at for never having been ordained, or a prerequisite to finding a wife (as having been a monk is considered a sign of maturity), or is done with some other kind of ulterior motive. In some places an ordination is regarded as an opportunity for collecting money, for which job there are always people on hand to help. It is

one way of getting rich. Even this they call Buddhism! And anyone who goes and criticizes this is considered to be ignorant of Buddhism or opposed to it.

Another example is the presentation of *kaṭhina* cloth. The Buddha's original intention was to have cloth for robes given to all the *bhikkhus* simultaneously so that they could sew it together themselves with a minimum loss of time. If there was only one robe, it was allocated to some *bhikkhu*, not necessarily the most senior one, whom the group considered worthy of using that robe or in need of it, and was presented to him in the name of the entire order. The Buddha's intention was to avoid any *bhikkhu*'s having a high opinion of himself. On that day everyone, regardless of rank, had to humble himself and be one of the crowd. Everyone had to lend a hand cutting and sewing the cloth, boiling tree pith to make the dye, and whatever else was involved in getting the robes ready and finished the same day. Making the cloth into robes was a co-operative effort. That is how the Buddha intended it to be, an event not necessarily involving lay people at all. But nowadays it has become an affair involving ceremony, fun and games, loud laughter and money seeking. It is just a picnic and is devoid of all the desirable results originally intended.

*Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, Handbook for Mankind, HMBB pp.10–12*

See also: **kaṭhina**, **pravāraṇā**, **uposhadha**.

1. *Vinaya Piṭaka, Mahāvagga 3, PTSV1 p.137.*
2. *E.g. Vinaya Piṭaka, Sutta Vibhanga, PTSV4 p.195ff., BDV2 p.4ff., passim.*
3. *Vinaya Piṭaka, Mahāvagga 7, PTSV1 pp.253–67; cf. VTP2 pp.146–56.*

**kesh(a)** (S/H/Pu) *Lit.* hair (of the head); the long hair traditional among Sikhs; one of the five K's which distinguish a member of the Sikh religion. See **pañj kakkā**.

**kesha-locha** (S), **kesha-loñcha** (Pk) *Lit.* hair (*kesha*) tears (*locha*); the practice of manually pulling out the hair and beard, practised by Jain mendicants; presumably so-called because of the tears produced in the eyes by the procedure. Traditionally, during initiation (*dīkshā*) into mendicant orders, the hair was pulled out in five handfuls. In modern times, the head and face are shaved prior to the initiation, leaving a small tuft on the crown, which is pulled out during the ceremony. The practice symbolizes complete detachment from the body and a willingness to face the hardships that accompany a life of austerity. Following initiation, mendicants, both men and women, remove

their hair manually two, three, or four times a year. *Digambaras* do this at a public ceremony in the presence of laypeople.<sup>1</sup>

1. See “keśa-loñca,” *A to Z of Jainism*, AZJW.

**khalwah** (A), **khalvat** (P) *Lit.* isolation, seclusion, solitude, retreat, withdrawal; reclusion, solitary retreat, spiritual retreat; also, spiritual emptiness, emptiness of self, lack of self in relationship to God; being devoid (*khālī*) of egotism; thus, *khalwah wa-‘uzlah* (isolation and retreat), which implies both solitude as well as withdrawal of the attention from the world, and *khalvat dar anjuman* (solitude in company), which means to keep one’s inner focus even in a gathering (*anjuman*).

Sufis vary in the emphasis they place on outer and inner solitude. Jurjānī defines *khalwah* as inner solitude:

Solitude (*khalwah*) means communion between the inner consciousness and God, where no other person or angelic presence is involved.

*Jurjānī, Ta’rīfāt, KTJ p.97; cf. in SSE7 p.2*

Shāh Ni‘mat Allāh Valī regards inner solitude as the true *khalwah*:

Solitude (*khalwah*) is communion between the inner consciousness and God, such that there is no place for anything other than God. This is the true meaning, the inner reality, of solitude (*khalwah*), while its outer significance is severance from that which is other than God. It is, however, possible to attain the spiritual reality of solitude (*khalwah*) by means of its outer form.

*Shāh Ni‘mat Allāh Valī, Rasā’il, RNV4 p.162; cf. in SSE7 p.1*

Ḥāfiẓ advises that the way to develop such inner life is contact with the “*ṣūfī*”, which in this context refers to the master:

O heart, if you seek the Water of Life (*Āb-i Ḥayāt*) –  
its source is the dust before the threshold  
of the *ṣūfī*’s retreat (*khalvat*).

*Ḥāfiẓ, Dīvān, DHA p.31, DIH p.77; cf. DHWC (36:13) p.99, in SSE7 p.1*

The master’s “retreat” refers to both his dwelling in this world, and his dwelling in eternity; the Water of Life is the divine power in creation.

Rūmī is clear that the real seclusion is inner. He recommends: “Choose seclusion (*khalwah*) even from your own existence,”<sup>1</sup> meaning a withdrawal from the sense of I-ness. He also speaks of *khalwah* as nightly meditation and communion with the divine beloved:

Alas that, after our sweetheart had utterly destroyed our pain,  
the night of seclusion (*khalvat-i shab*) passed away and became day!

*Rūmī, Maṣnavī II:1848; cf. MJR2 p.316*

That is, for the mystic, *khalwah* is not a ritualistic or religious observance; every time he comes into the presence of the divine beloved within, in meditation, he is in *khalwah*, and he laments each time he must return to this world.

Shihāb al-Dīn Suhrawardī says that the purpose of a retreat is to “draw near to God”:

The purpose of retreat (*khalwah*) is to draw near to God, with a heart full of joy. . . . The filling of the heart with light strengthens the attractive force of the Spirit of God, which draws the heart to its true abiding place, the invisible world, where it becomes perfectly tranquil and, like a polished mirror, reflects the divine radiance. This attraction is stronger than that of a magnet to iron. As the magnet attracts the iron because of their affinity in substance, so there is an affinity between the Divine and the human spirit, which draws them together.

Retreat (*khalwah*) is like a smith’s forge in which, by the fire of austerity the desire becomes fused, purified, delicate and gleaming like a mirror, and in it appears the form of the Invisible. For every morning of the retreat (*khalwah*), a veil should lift and the retreatant find himself drawing ever nearer to God.

*Shihāb al-Dīn Suhrawardī, ‘Awārif al-Ma’ārif, Iḥyā’ 2 (margin),*

*AM pp.292, 305ff.; cf. in RMI pp.91–92*

Ibn al-‘Arabī writes in such a way that *khalwah* can mean both the inner practice of solitude or the outer form of a retreat. Much depends on how the passage is translated and interpreted:

He should follow the path of the great masters and dedicate himself to retreat (*khalwah*) and invocation. Then God will give direct awareness of that to his heart. . . . Unveiling comes to them in their retreats (*khalwah*) when the divine lights dawn within them, bringing knowledge purified of corroding stains.

*Ibn al-‘Arabī, Meccan Revelations 1:120.12, 2:600.3,*

*FMIA1 (1:6) p.185, FMIA4 (4:277) p.343; cf. SPK p.xii*

He also says that inner experience of the divine presence leads to an awareness of the Divine in the outer world, the world of “secondary causes”:

Every seeker of his Lord must be alone with himself with his Lord in his inmost consciousness; for God gave man an outward dimension (*ẓāhir*) and an inward dimension (*bāṭin*) only so that he might be alone

with God in his inward dimension and witness Him in his outward dimension within the secondary causes, after having gazed upon Him in his inward dimension, so that he may discern Him within the midst of the secondary causes. Otherwise, he will never recognize Him. He who enters the spiritual retreat (*khalwah*) with God does so only for this reason, since man's inward dimension is the cell of his retreat (*khalwah*).

*Ibn al-ʿArabī, Meccan Revelations III:265.1,*

*FMIA5 (4:358) p.391; cf. SPK pp.158–59*

*Khalwah* was also a component of the spiritual and ascetic practices of the Jewish Sufis or *ḥasidim* (pietists) of twelfth- and thirteenth-century Egypt, Spain, and Israel. Often, *khalwah* was practised for periods of forty days and nights, in imitation of the prophet Moses and the forty-year wanderings of the Israelites in the wilderness of the Sinai peninsula. This period of retreat was known as the *arbaʿīna* (the forty), a number associated with spiritual growth and maturity. For example, a minimum age of forty years was set by the rabbis before one was allowed to study Kabbalah or be initiated into the kabbalistic path.

Abraham Maimonides (son of Moses Maimonides) devoted a chapter of his *Kitāb Kifāyah al-Ābidīn* ('A Comprehensive Guide for the Servants of God') to the virtues of *khalwah*. He and his son 'Obadyah Maimonides both regarded *khalwah* as the highest mystical path, leading to inner illumination (*nūr bāṭin*) and prophetic communion (*wasūl nabawī*) while living an otherwise normal human life. 'Obadyah maintained that the spiritual practice of the biblical patriarchs involved solitary meditation, which the *ḥasidim* of his period imitated in their practice of *khalwah*. In this sense, *khalwah*, as practised by Jewish Sufis, was similar to *hibodedut* (secluded meditation).

According to 'Obadyah, the most important aspect of *khalwah bāṭinah* (inward seclusion) was control of the mind, something that did not depend upon isolation in the wilderness, and could be accomplished while living anywhere. He also advised that inner experiences should be treasured within oneself and not treated lightly. In his *al-Maḳālah al-Ḥawḍiyah* ('Treatise of the Pool'), 'Obadyah writes:

Realize that the state to which you have attained or to which you have drawn near is to be likened to the case of one who has found a precious object. If he be conscious and appreciative of the value of his find, then he will evermore be beholden unto the Most High, who has bestowed upon him this (gift) without (his having suffered) either effort or hardship. Then he will utilize it in perfecting his soul, for the sake of Him who has been merciful towards him. . . .

Safeguard then this (gift), O seeker, for it is a most precious and valuable commodity. . . . Remain sincere to it and withdraw from



those occupations which turn you aside from it whilst you are among your people and your kinsfolk. Do not believe, like the poor in spirit, that seclusion (*inqiṭā'*) is meant for the mountains and caves and that by merely withdrawing thereunto they will accomplish aught, for it is not so.

*'Obadyah Maimonides, al-Maqālah al-Ḥawḍīyah 13b–14a; cf. TOP p.93*

When the passions have been subdued, he says, meditation (*khalwah bāṭinah*) will begin to bear fruit:

When you remain alone with your soul after having subdued your passions, a gate will open before you through which you will contemplate wonders. When your five external senses come to rest, your internal senses will awaken and you will behold a resplendent light emanating from the splendour of Reason (*al-'Aql*, the divine Intelligence). You will perceive mighty and awesome voices which leave a man bewildered.

*'Obadyah Maimonides, al-Maqālah al-Ḥawḍīyah 12a; cf. TOP p.90*

Speaking of inner solitude and focus of mind, 'Obadyah Maimonides counsels:

Know my son, that if you desire to achieve the state of solitude (*khalwah*) and a worldly affair crosses your mind while you are seated in contemplation, I urge you to expel and banish it from your abode and bar the door in its face: "Above all that you guard, guard your heart."<sup>2</sup>

*'Obadyah Maimonides, al-Maqālah al-Ḥawḍīyah 20b; cf. TOP p.104*

And similarly:

Be extremely mindful that no residue should remain in the pool (of your heart) and beware that no impurity should seep into the water that flows therein. For any (impurity) remaining there will be restored to you by the imaginative faculty when you sleep or when you awake or at times of solitary devotion (*khalwah*). You will think it an object from without, whereas it is part of the dregs left in the pool.

*'Obadyah Maimonides, al-Maqālah al-Ḥawḍīyah 13a; cf. TOP p.92*

The austere way of life prescribed for these Sufi *ḥasidim* included simplicity in dress and conduct, and control of sleeping, eating, and speaking. Normally, they would defer marriage until at least the age of forty in order to pursue their spiritual life more intensively. Nor were *samā'* ceremonies, involving singing and dancing, which were common among Muslim Sufis, adopted by the Jewish *ḥasidim*.

The significance of Sufi *dhikr* (recollection, remembrance) – inner *dhikr* of the heart practised during *khalwah* – is also mentioned in Jewish texts. As another Jewish Sufi of the time, Abraham he-Ḥasid, writes in his commentary on the *Song of Songs*:

One can attain to the spiritual world through the practice of outward and inward holiness, excessive love of God and the delight in His recollection (*dhikr*) and holy names.

*Abraham he-Ḥasid, Commentary on the Song of Songs, JFAH, in TOP p.17*

See also: **bāṭin** (8.5), **chillah**, **ḥasid** (7.1), **hitbodedut** (8.5), **hūsh dar dam** (8.5), **i'tikāf**, **jalwah** (8.1).

1. Rūmī, *Maṣnavī* I:645; cf. *MJR2* p.37.
2. Cf. *Proverbs* 4:23.

**kharq** (A/P) *Lit.* rending; the Sufi practice of tearing garments in ecstasy. See **khirqah**.

**khaṭ karma** (H) See **shaṭ-karma**.

**khirqah** (A), **khirqat** (P) *Lit.* cloak; in Sufism, the woollen cloak worn by Sufis, usually blue, and generally patched; also called a *muraqqa'*, which refers specifically to the Sufi's patched cloak, a *khirqah* being a more general term for any kind of cloak; generally given to a novice by his master (*pīr*, *murshid*, *shaykh*), and worn by the disciple as a sign of submission and devotion to his master.

Various Sufis have given symbolic meanings to the *khirqah*. It is said to represent “rectitude”,<sup>1</sup> “abandonment of opinion, as well as striving”,<sup>2</sup> the “battering down of the being and egocentricity of the Sufi, thereby habituating him inwardly to humility, abjectness, and self-negation”,<sup>3</sup> and so on.

The original idea behind the wearing of the cloak was as a constant reminder of the path he follows – to both the wearer and to those he encounters. 'Izz al-Dīn Maḥmūd Qāshānī writes:

The virtues of the *ṣūfī* cloak (*khirqah*) are many, not least being its role in changing the previous habits of the disciple and weaning him from the attachment of physical nature and pleasures of the *nafs* (lower mind, ego-self). Just as the *nafs* experiences pleasure in eating, drinking, and sexual activity, it takes pleasure in dress as well. When one becomes accustomed to wearing particular types of clothes, one

takes pleasure in presenting oneself in a particular style. A change of clothes and style engenders a change in patterns of behaviour, particularly when the actual process of change is a devotional act. Hence, the Prophet said, “I was appointed to prophecy in order to change (traditional) habits.”

Another virtue of the *ṣūfī* cloak is its power to deter the company of bad companions and mischief makers.

*Maḥmūd Qāshānī, Miṣbāḥ al-Hidāyah wa-Miftāḥ al-Kifāyah, MHK pp.148–49, in SSE5 p.38*

It was customary during traditional Sufi *samāʿ* (music and dance gatherings) for a disciple who had become enraptured to throw off his *khirqah* or to give it to the singer (*qawwāl*).<sup>4</sup> Should he become ecstatic, he might also tear his *khirqah*. A number of Sufis have observed that having thus disposed of his *khirqah*, it was improper for him to reclaim it, even if it was of great value, since this would be an indication of regret for his uplifted state. Sometimes the master himself would order that his own coat should be torn up, and distributed to his disciples as a blessing.<sup>5</sup> The practice was obviously a matter of some debate among Sufis, and not all were in agreement with it. In his *Kashf al-Maḥjūb*, Hujwīrī analyses at length the various motives and circumstances surrounding the tearing of a cloak, the distribution of its resultant pieces, and so on,<sup>6</sup> though he adds elsewhere in a play on words that “It is inward glow (*ḥurqat*) that makes the *ṣūfī*, not the religious cloak (*khirqat*).”<sup>7</sup> There are also recorded instances of a Sufi master stripping a Sufi of his cloak for bad conduct, and dismissing him from his presence.<sup>8</sup>

The *khirqah* is commonly used as a symbol in Sufi poetry. Sometimes, the *khirqah* represents the physical body, while tearing it or throwing it away symbolizes the joyous escape of the soul from the body. ‘Aṭṭār addresses the divine beloved who slowly and inexorably uncovers souls by the intoxication of divine love, removing from them the “cloak of being” – freeing them from the material body and the realm of individual and egocentric existence:

Moment by moment, by drunkenness,  
you pull this cloak of being (*khirqah-ʿi ḥastī*) from your lovers.

*‘Aṭṭār, Dīvān 737:9779, DASN p.515; cf. in SSE5 p.50*

Rūmī exhorts his soul to leave the body, the “house of being” and enter the divinity of Nonbeing:

Come forth, so that I may now throw off  
the cloak (*khirqat*) of the bodily frame!  
Come forth, so that I may now give up the house of being.

*Rūmī, Dīvān-i Shams-i Tabrīz 324:3520, KSD1 p.195; cf. in SSE5 p.51*

It is the “zephyr” of divine grace, he says, that will rend the “cloak” of the body and the ego:

O *ṣūfīs* of love, tear off your *ṣūfī* cloaks (*khirqah ḥā*)!  
The flower tears its cloak (*jāmah*) into a hundred pieces  
out of enchantment with the zephyr.

*Rūmī, Dīvān-i Shams-i Tabrīz 198:2173, KSD1 p.122; cf. in SSE5 p.46*

Ḥāfiẓ also advocates the destruction of this “cloak”, and seeking the spiritual state of the masters, sometimes depicted as “rogues” in Sufi symbolism:

O mystic (*ʿarīf*), holy traveller!  
When you have set fire to the cloak (*khirqat*),  
strive to become chief of the circle of the world’s rogues (*rindān*).

*Ḥāfiẓ, Dīvān, DHA p.144, DIH p.251; cf. DHWC (319:3) p.552*

Valī uses *khirqah* when speaking of the coverings or bodies successively received by the soul on its descent from the Divine:

God first bestows the spiritual robe (*khilʿat-i rūḥānīyah*) upon  
each essence (*ʿayn, i.e. soul*), then the cloak of patterns (*khirqah-ʿi miṣālīyah*), and finally the sensory cloak (*khirqah-ʿi ḥissīyah*).

*Shāh Niʿmat Allāh Valī, Rasāʿil, RNV3 p.191; cf. in SSE5 p.48*

As with the monks of all spiritual traditions, the outer garb does not necessarily imply the inner purity of the wearer. Thus, the *khirqah* came to represent hypocrisy, as well as the body. To make the point, Saʿdī casts himself as a hypocritical Sufi. *Manāt*, *Suwāʿ*, *Lāt* and *ʿUzzá* were idols worshipped by ancient Arabians.<sup>9</sup> Here, they symbolize the essential idolatry of attachment to material things:

In the midst of the anchorite’s cell,  
I am only a pretentious cloak wearer (*khirqah-pūsh*):  
Clad in a dervish’s patched cloak (*khirqah*),  
devoured by false pride,  
and devoid of spiritual Reality.  
I am an idolater of phenomenal forms  
in the house of deceit and fraud (this world),  
and a worshipper of *Manāt*, *Sawāʿ*, *Lāt*, and *ʿUzzá*.  
I shamelessly boast of my manliness,  
but have prostituted my soul like a harlot.  
Under this old patched garment (*dalaq*),

I am, by reason of my hypocrisy,  
the Pharaoh of this age;  
And yet I claim to be the Moses  
on the Mount Sinai of her love....  
O Sa'dī! Be like me through the pure wine:  
It is through this wine (of divine love)  
that I am loved by His holiness the master.  
*Sa'dī, Badāyī' 115:1-4, 6, KSSS p.373; cf. BOS p.127*

Ḥāfiẓ puts it simply:

Not all purity without blemish is the cloak (*naqd*) of the *ṣūfī*:  
many a *khirqah* is worthy of the fire!  
*Ḥāfiẓ, Dīvān, DHA p.116, DIH p.210; cf. DHWC (180:1) p.348*

He also indicates that beneath his ancient garment, he drinks the wine of love:

I wear this old patched garment (*muraqqa'*)  
so that none should suspect  
that beneath this cloak (*khirqah*), I drink wine.  
*Ḥāfiẓ, Dīvān, DHA p.114, DIH p.203; cf. DHWC (263:2) p.468*

He therefore exhorts his fellow Sufis:

Come, O *ṣūfī*!  
Let us remove the cloak of hypocrisy (*khirqah-i sālūs*):  
let us erase the head of this image of hypocrisy.  
*Ḥāfiẓ, Dīvān, DHA p.187, DIH p.314; cf. DHWC (409:1) p.694, in SSE5 p.49*

The fire of hypocrisy and deceit  
will consume the harvest of religion.  
O Ḥāfiẓ! Cast away this woollen cloak (*khirqah-i pashmīnah*)  
and leave this place.  
*Ḥāfiẓ, Dīvān, DHA p.224, DIH p.360; cf. DHWC (477:10) p.789*

And Kirmānī adds that it is the master ("rogue"), whose spirit is free from material constraints, who will actually ensure the spiritual evolution of his disciples:

Mushtāq 'Alī, that stone-drunk rogue with a free-spirited heart,  
stripped the cloak of abstinence (*khirqah-i parhīz*)  
from the hypocrites.  
*'Alī Shāh Kirmānī, Dīvān-i Mushtāqīyah 115, DMK p.73; cf. in SSE5 p.49*

1. 'Irāqī, *Iṣṭilāḥāt*, *RLRI* p.84, in *SSE5* p.35.
2. Muḥammad al-Dārābī, *Laṭīfah-i Ghaybī* 2, *LGMD* p.140, in *SSE5* p.35.
3. Javād Nūrbakhsh, *Sufī Symbolism*, *SSE5* p.35.
4. See Javād Nūrbakhsh, *Sufī Symbolism*, *FNIS* p.47, *SSE5* p.43; *Maqālāt-i Shams-i Tabrīz*, *MSTA* p.108.
5. E.g. Rūzbihān, *Mashrab al-Arwāḥ* 5:15, *MARB* p.102, in *SSE5* p.44.
6. Hujwīrī, *Kashf al-Maḥjūb* XXV, *KMM* pp.543–44, *KM* pp.417–18.
7. Hujwīrī, *Kashf al-Maḥjūb* IV, *KMM* pp.52–53, *KM* p.47.
8. E.g. Muḥammad ibn al-Munawwar, *Asrār al-Tawḥīd*, *ATSI* p.81, in *SSE5* p.47.
9. *Qur'ān* 53:19–20.

**khitān** (A/P) *Lit.* circumcision; a practice carried over from Judaism; a matter of custom in Islam, not of religious law. Unlike the Kabbalists, Sufis appear to have made little, if any, comment on the practice.

See also: **brit**.

**kīla** (S), **phur ba** (T) *Lit.* peg, pin, wedge, spike, stake; a tent peg; a ritual dagger used by all schools of Tibetan Buddhism, having a blade with a triangular cross-section and an ornate handle, usually surmounted by one to three heads of a wrathful, meditational deity (S. *ishṭa-devatā*, T. *yi dam*), often *Vajrakīlaya* (S. 'Thunderbolt Dagger', T. *Dorje Phurba*), a personification of the *phur ba*, the lower part of whose body takes the form of a *phur ba*; used in tantric rituals to pin to the ground malevolent demonic forces, evil spirits, hostile powers and other negative influences, and to avert obstacles; one of a number of implements commonly used in tantric rituals, including the *vajra* (thunderbolt, like a small ornate dumbbell), *ghaṇṭā* (hand bell), and prayer wheel (T. *ma ni 'khor lo*). Wrathful deities, also known as 'wisdom kings' are enlightened beings who have adopted a fierce countenance for the benefit of sentient beings. Their wrathful visage is intended to frighten demons and encourage human beings to behave properly.<sup>1</sup>

The *kīla* appears in an Indian myth in which the malignant dragon Vṛitra, *asura* (demon) of drought, is slain by the deity *Indra*. The dragon is asleep on the floating rock island of Mount Mandara, his head and twisted coils imprisoning the *amṛita* (water of life) in a dark and unmoving pool. *Indra* hurls his *vajra* (thunderbolt) at Vṛitra, who is slain when the *vajra*'s central spike (*kīla*) pierces his head. The power of creative potential hidden in the water of life is thus allowed to flow. The *kīla* also pins the previously floating island of Mandara to the ocean floor, providing stability to the earth. For this reason, Mount Mandara is known as *Indrakīla* (*Indra*'s spike). Mount

Mandara appears again as the churning pole in a well-known myth in which the deity *Vishṇu*, in his incarnation as Kūrma, the Tortoise, stations himself at the bottom of the ocean, and allows Mount Mandara to be placed upon his back. The mountain serves as a firm axis around which the gods and demons – with the cosmic serpent Vāsuki twisted around the mountain as a rope – churn the waters for the recovery of lost *amṛita* and fourteen other sacred things.<sup>2</sup>

The *phur ba* originated in Indian Vedic tradition as the stake or post (*kīla*) used to tether domestic animals intended for ritual sacrifice. The peg or pin (*S. shamyā*) of an oxen's yoke was a divination aid used to locate the head of the invisible earth serpent, which was believed to be the most auspicious place for the sacrificial altar. This was accomplished by repeatedly throwing the *shamyā* towards the east until it landed upright in the ground. Having found the location, the serpent's head was then staked, thereby securing the area in which the rites were to be conducted.

A similar ritual, in which the head of the earth serpent is determined by charts and astrological methods, is still practised in India before starting a building project. Likewise in Tibet, before laying the foundation of a Buddhist monastery or stupa, the area is first secured by determining the position of the earth deity's body using geomantic and astrological methods. To the accompaniment of *mantras*, the area is then marked out with wooden stakes linked together with thread of a particular colour. The intention is to create a sacred space or hallowed ground. Similar rites have been practised by Western occultists for establishing magic circles or pentagrams. In another variant of the Tibetan ritual, a site to be used for tantric rites is first 'secured' by subjugating the local demon, pinning him to the ground with a *phur ba*, before placing a *maṇḍala* on top of him.

The 'pinning down' of demons is a common practice in Tibetan Buddhism. Even the tent pegs (*phur 'gyur*) used in the erection of a tent may be seen by a tantric practitioner as 'securing' the site by pinning down the local demons, spreadeagled beneath the surface.

As a traditional ritual implement, the *phur ba* is used in a number of ways in tantric ritual. This commonly involves staking out the site with multiple *phur ba* to render it safe from negative influences and other obstacles. In the preparation for one particular initiation ritual, ten *phur ba* are stuck in the ground around a temporary ritual *maṇḍala*, which is to be the focus of the ceremony. One *phur ba* is placed at each of the four cardinal points, four at the intermediate points, and one east of east and another west of west, representing the zenith and nadir, respectively. The intention is to protect and bless the site by

trapping the obstructing forces that did not (previously) heed the commands (to leave) and striking with the dagger (in the four cardinal and

four intermediate directions). In order to prevent the obstructing forces from encroaching later, (the master) imagines a protective circle and then blesses (the site).

*Jamgön Kongtrül, Treasury of Knowledge 6:4, TK6 pp.221, 464 (n.20)*

Speaking metaphorically, Jamgön Kongtrül also says that there are “four kinds of *kīla*”: “the *kīla* of pristine awareness, which is total presence”; “the *kīla* of supreme *bodhichitta* (a mind turned towards enlightenment)”; “the *kīla* of boundless compassion”; and “the *kīla* made of composite matter”. These four *kīla*’s pierce the four obstacles of spiritual ignorance, lack of realization, the beings of the six realms, and the hostile powers who encompass the ten directions.<sup>3</sup>

The *phur ba* is also used much in the same manner as a magic wand. According to various legends, tantric Buddhist masters have brandished their *phur ba* with miraculous results. The power, of course, is presumed to lie in the master more than the *phur ba*. For example:

This *Vajrakīla* tradition is famous for its utterly vast occult power. By brandishing the *kīla* at a brushfire in a sandalwood forest, the great master Padmasambhava restored the forest. By brandishing it at the flooding waters of the Ganges, Vimalamitra fixed the river’s course. By brandishing it at Mount Trakar Kongcen, the Newar Shīlamañju made the rock face crumble to pieces. By thrusting it at the tracks of a wolf, the venerable lady Kharcenza caused the wolf to be swept away in an avalanche. By raising it against the crow which had carried off his rosary, Menu Gyelwei Nyingpo made the bird fall to earth. And by inflicting it upon the yak-hair tents of the Mön army, Lo Pelgi Lodrö overpowered them. In these and other instances, these masters, thrusting the *kīla* at both enemies and obstacles, were invincible, even in the face of powerful magic. And by thrusting it inwardly at the five poisonous conflicting emotions, numberless masters obtained supreme accomplishment.

*Dudjom Jigdral Yeshe Dorje, History of the Nyingma School, NST1 p.714*

The Tibetan *phur ba* is made from a variety of materials and in a number of designs, centring around a basic theme. Originally a simple wooden stake or even a large acacia thorn, a ritual *phur ba* characteristically consists of a complex, three-edged blade, tapering to a sharp point, set in an ornate handle capped with the faces of one to three wrathful deities. The triangular blade may itself be ornamented with two twisting *nāgas* (serpent deities). Other decorative designs, generally symbolic, may be built into the blade and handle. Materials used include wood such as acacia, black rosewood, sandalwood or thornwood, monkey or human bone, clay and cast metal, usually brass and



iron, which may sometimes be of highly valued, meteoric origin. A *phur ba* can also be carved from rock crystal, symbolizing its adamantine, diamond, or *vajra* nature.

The *phur ba* is used extensively as a ritual implement in Tibetan tantric Buddhism to subdue the forces of evil, and overcome and eliminate obstacles. In the black-hat dance ritual, central to many Tibetan 'cham dances, those taking part use a *phur ba* to strike an effigy representing evil or obstructive demonic forces. According to a traditional story, Padmasambhava, credited with introducing *Vajrayāna* Buddhism to Tibet in the eighth century, used the *phur ba* to subjugate the *māras* (demons) who were hindering him when he was meditating on a wrathful deity. To help his disciples overcome any obstacles standing in the way of their propagating the *Dharma*, he later taught them the *Vajrakīlaya Tantra*.

See also: 'cham.

1. For a number of the details in this entry, see “phurba,” *Oxford Dictionary of Buddhism*, ODB; “phur pa,” “Vajrakīlaya,” *Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*, PDB; Robert Beer, *Encyclopedia of Tibetan Symbols and Motifs*, ETSM pp.245–49.
2. *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* 8:7.16–17, *SB10* pp.255–56; *Vishṇu Purāṇa* 1:9.
3. Jamgön Kongtrül, *Treasury of Knowledge* 6:4, TK6 p.324.

**kippah** (He) *Lit.* skullcap, dome; the skullcap worn by Jewish men as a symbol of their respect for, awareness of, and submission to the Divine; worn especially during prayer, when pronouncing a blessing, studying the *Torah* or entering a synagogue, but often at all other times as well. *Kippahs* can range from simple black to ornate and coloured.

In the Jewish tradition, covering the head out of respect for God probably originated in biblical times when priests were instructed to cover their heads with a “mitre (turban) of fine linen”.<sup>1</sup> The *Talmud* adds that wearing the mitre “made atonement for arrogance”.<sup>2</sup>

Wearing a *kippah* is not a religious injunction and there is no biblical commandment for the ordinary person that advocates it. Some scholars also cite the medieval custom of covering one’s head in the presence of royalty. God is considered the ‘King of Kings’, and so one would cover one’s head in submission to Him. Keeping the head covered at all times is a way of being reminded that one is always in the presence of God.

1. *Exodus* 28:39–43, 29:6; *Leviticus* 16:4.
2. *Babylonian Talmud*, *Tractate Zevachim* 88b, JCL.

**kīrtan(a)** (S/H/Pu), **kīrat** (Pu) *Lit.* repeating, saying, telling; song, singing, particularly of a religious nature; chanting or singing of religious or spiritual songs and *mantras*, accompanied by musical instruments such as the harmonium and *mṛidanga* (double-ended drum); the playing of devotional music and ecstatic dancing; commonly practised in Vaishnavite, Sikh, *sant*, and some Buddhist traditions, as well as other religious and spiritual groups; mystically, listening to the divine Melody within; hence, the eternal reverberation of the divine Music throughout creation, also called *Hari Kīrtan* (God's Music) and *akhand Kīrtan* (the unbroken Song).

Although mystics may enjoy singing devotional songs, and dancing with their disciples, they remain clear that this is only a means to an end. It helps to create an atmosphere of devotion in which the inner Music can be contacted in meditation.

Mystics teach that the inner *Nām* (Name) or *Kīrtan* is the true *Kīrtan*, not communal singing of devotional songs, which are only outward imitations or reflections of what lies within. Guru Amardās says that singing and dancing do not result in the departure of human weakness nor of the uncertainties surrounding human existence:

One may dance and play numerous instruments,  
 but this mind is blind and deaf;  
 So for whose benefit is this speaking and preaching?  
 Deep within is the fire of greed and the dust storm of doubt.  
 The lamp of knowledge is not burning,  
 and understanding is not obtained.  
 The *gurmukh* has the light of devotional worship within his heart:  
 Understanding his own self, he meets God.

*Guru Amardās, Ādi Granth 364, AGK*

Maharaj Sawan Singh writes that the music that leads the soul back to God is that of the divine Word (*Shabd*) or Name:

The *kīrtan* of *Nām* or *Shabd* resounding in the forehead of every human being is the means to God-realization.

*Maharaj Sawan Singh, My Submission, MSPC p.118*

Guru Arjun says that the ecstatic “bliss (*ānand*)” of the divine “*Kathā* (Discourse)” of the celestial “music (*kīrtan*)” and divine “melody (*dhun*) . . . resonate day and night”.<sup>1</sup> He also speaks of the “unbroken Music (*akhand Kīrtan*)” of the divine “Word (*Mantar*)”, which is the spiritual “food” of those who have a perfect *guru*:

The *guru* has bestowed his glance of grace upon all,  
 within whose hearts the Lord has implanted His *Mantar* (Word).

The *akhand Kīrtan* is their food and nourishment:  
 says Nānak, they have the perfect true *guru* (*satgur*).  
*Guru Arjun, Ādi Granth 236, AGK*

Tukārām also maintains that the way to God lies in the divine Name:

Praising (*sankīrtan*) the Lord's Name (*Nām*)  
 is a very easy way to find God –  
 It burns away the sins of entire lifetimes,  
 and you don't have to hide away in a forest.  
 There is no such difficulty,  
 for the Lord Himself comes joyfully to your own home.  
*Tukārām, Abhang 2458, STG2 p.508; cf. TCSD p.111*

See also: **Hari Kīrtan** (3.2), **Kīrtan** (3.2).

1. *Guru Arjun, Ādi Granth 820.*

**korban** (He) *Lit.* that which brings one closer; sacrifice, often but not always animal sacrifice, as for instance in *Exodus*, *Leviticus* and *Numbers*.<sup>1</sup> See **sacrifice**.

1. *Exodus 20:24, 24:5, 29:42, 30:28, 31:9, 32:6; Leviticus 1:1–17ff.; also Numbers, passim, etc.*

**kòutóu, kētóu** (C) *Lit.* to knock (*kòu*) the head (*tóu*); anglicized as 'kowitz'; traditional greeting, typically to a superior, especially (in a Daoist context) to a senior monastic official or spiritual master; involves kneeling and touching or pressing one's forehead to the ground.

**kṛipāṇa, kirpān** (H/Pu) *Lit.* a sword; a small straight sword, more like a dagger than a sword; part of the traditional dress of a Sikh, believed to have been adopted in the time of Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth *guru*, as protection in times of persecution; one of the *pañj kakkā*, the five outward signs of a follower of the Sikh religion. See **pañj kakkā**.

**kumangakai** (Mo) *Lit.* food offered for consumption (*kai*) by the spirit of a departed ancestor; a Māori ritual or ceremony in which food or objects are offered for consumption or use by the spirit of a departed ancestor (*atua*). An *atua kumangakai* (ancestor to whom food offerings are made), also known as an *atua apa hau* (*atua*, ancestor; *apa*, spirit; *hau*, offering), refers to the

spirit of a dead ancestor who passes, after death, into a living descendant, who thus becomes that spirit's medium. The *atua kumangakai* is then able to counsel and protect its living descendants.

The Māori elder Paitini Wi Tapeka (b.c. 1844) explains some of the details to the New Zealand ethnographer Elsdon Best (1856–1931):

This (*kumangakai*) is the feeding of the (*atua*) *apa hau*, a ceremony performed by the medium. It was thus described by Paitini Wi Tapeka of Tūhoe: "My father dies, his *wairua* (spirit) goes to the *Rēinga* (underworld), the (*atua*) *kumangakai* (spirit of the dead) remains as an *atua* for me. When it is fed by me, the food will be consumed; we cannot see the *atua* consuming it, but we see that no food remains in the hand (of the medium). Then we know that the *atua* is there and has devoured that food. Hence the term *kumangakai*. I would feed that *atua* of mine whenever I felt inclined so to do. The food is usually held in the closed hand, when the hand is opened no food remains."

Elsdon Best, "Spiritual Concepts of the Maori," *SCM2* p.1

The role of medium to an *atua kumangakai* is generally passed down the family, from father to son:

"Should your father be a medium of the (*atua*) *kumangakai*, the Māori *atua*, the same office will probably be transferred to you (*whakaukia*). This would be done by the aged father laying his hand on you and speaking in a peculiar manner; that is to say, no words are distinguishable, it sounds like nonsense. That is all; the *atua* will now pass to you, his son."

Elsdon Best, "Spiritual Concepts of the Maori," *SCM2* p.1

With the help of the *atua kumangakai*, the medium is now able to know things that would otherwise remain hidden:

"Then should anyone insult you grievously, you will know all about it; though that person may be afar off, your *atua kumangakai* will acquaint you. When you see that person you will say to him, 'You have cursed me. It has been divulged to me as I slept. Do not conceal your sin, but make amends to me, lest you perish.' He will then hand to you some article, probably a greenstone ornament, in order to save his life. That ornament will then be 'fed' (given) by you to your *atua*.

"You hold it in your closed hand and repeat a *karakia* (incantation), your hand trembles violently and, on your opening the same, the greenstone has disappeared. Only you, the medium of the *atua*, can see the

same, other people cannot. After a time the person who cursed you may express his desire that the ornament be returned to him, and this will be done. You, the medium, will then repeat your unintelligible talk and call upon the *atua* to return the article. Bystanders will merely see you gazing into space, looking for the *wairua* bringing back the greenstone, but you are the only one who can see it coming, the others will only see the article when it is deposited before you by the *atua*. I once saw an old woman place a half-crown in her hand, which was covered by the hand of a bystander. She repeated an incantation and told the man to lift his hand. The coin was gone. She then brought it back again by means of the same process. Bystanders, when the medium is calling upon his *atua* to return any article, will gaze intently at the ground in front of the medium, in order to see that article deposited there.”

*Elsdon Best, “Spiritual Concepts of the Maori,” SCM2 pp.1–2*

How much of this is the result of a magician’s skill is uncertain. Best himself observes:

The above would appear to be but a common illustration of sleight of hand, but a more interesting illustration may be noted.... The expression *kumanga iti* means ‘a sparing eater’, and if the offering to the *atua* can be concealed in a closed hand, then the term is well applied. Sometimes, however, a bird was selected, which would be wrapped in the cloak of the medium when being offered. Should any of the bones of the bird remain in the cloak after the ceremony, that was considered an evil omen.

The medium could send his *atua* to fetch articles from far distant places. The terms *atua apa hau* and *atua kumangakai* were equally applied to these spirits of the dead which, after death, protected their living descendants.... The *atua* would be sent to recover any article taken by an unauthorized person. The priests would collect at the sacred place of the village, and the *atua* would be seen flying through the air, bearing the article in its mouth.

*Elsdon Best, “Spiritual Concepts of the Maori,” SCM2 p.2*

See also: **apa** (►1), **atua** (►1), **wairua** (8.1), **whakaikia** (7.5).

**Kumbha Melā** (H) *Lit.* water-pot (*kumbha*) assembly, gathering or fair (*melā*); an assembly of people carrying water pots; a pot festival; a huge Hindu religious gathering held every three years, at one of four places – Allāhabād, Hardwār, Ujjain, and Nāsik – each place therefore hosting the *melā* once every twelve years. Each location is situated on the banks of one of India’s sacred rivers.

Allāhabād is located at the confluence of India's two most sacred rivers – the Ganges and the Yamunā; Hardwār is on the Ganges; Ujjain is on the Kshiprā; and Nāsik is on the Godāvarī. The timing of the fairs is based upon astrological considerations, the most auspicious time being that of the largest of these *Kumbha Melās*, held at Allāhabād. Around 80 million people were thought to have visited the *Kumbha Melā* at Allāhabād in 2013, probably the world's largest gathering.

According to accounts related in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* and the *Vishṇu Purāṇa*, the *devas* (deities) lost their powers as the result of a curse that was laid upon them by the *muni* (sage) Durvāsā. The *devas* turned to Lord *Brahmā* and Lord *Shiva* for help, who passed them on to Lord *Vishṇu*. *Vishṇu* advised them to churn the ocean of milk (*kshīra-sāgara*) in order to acquire a pot of *amṛita* (nectar of immortality). For this, it was necessary for the *devas* to make an alliance with their arch-enemies, the *asuras* (demons). The basis of their pact was that they would share the *amṛita* between them; but when the pot of *amṛita* emerged, the *asuras* ran off with it. During the course of their flight, *amṛita* was spilled at four places, which became the sites of the *Kumbha Melās*; or, in another version of the myth, the *asuras* rested at these four places.

The more prosaic origin of the event is possibly as the development of a fertility festival held on the river banks in northern India in ancient times. At certain astrologically auspicious times, pots of various grains were immersed in the river, and then mixed with the other grain before sowing, in the expectation that the addition of blessed grain to the main seed would result in an abundant harvest.

Water pots are carried by the *sādhūs* at the *melā* as a symbol of their renunciation. A pilgrimage to a *melā* is understood to be highly auspicious, and millions of devout Hindus assemble there to bathe in the holy waters, offer prayers to their favourite deities, and present gifts to the *sādhūs*. It is believed that performing these rituals will wipe away their sins and those of their ancestors, going back eighty-eight generations, and that they will be assured of liberation from the cycle of birth and death.<sup>1</sup>

1. See “kumbha-mela,” *Hindu World, HWW1*.

**kunkuma** (S), **kumkum** (H), **kungū** (Pu) *Lit.* saffron; traditionally, an orange-yellow powder made from the flowers and pollen of the plant *Crocus sativus*; regarded as sacred and used in religious ceremonies and in certain social customs; one of the offerings commonly made to an idol or at an altar. Due to the high cost of saffron, *kumkum* is generally made from powdered turmeric root mixed with slaked lime (calcium hydroxide), which turns it red. It is often mixed with various dyes or made entirely from synthetic pigments to provide a wide range of colours.

Mystics find no spiritual value in rituals and customs of this nature. Guru Nānak writes of those who practise such rituals:

In his home, he keeps the Lord's image,  
 along with a host of deities.  
 These he worships, keeping them bathed.  
 To them he offers *kungū*, sandalwood and flowers,  
 and falling at their feet propitiates them profusely.  
 From people, his clothing and food he begs:  
 for such blind actions the penalty too is great.  
 This idol can neither feed the hungry nor save the dying.

*Guru Nānak, Ādi Granth 1240–41, AGT*

See also: **tilaka**.

**kǔxíng, jìnyùzhǔyì** (C) *Lit.* to practise (*xíng*) suffering (*kǔ*); to perform acts of hardship; hence, ascetic practice (*kǔxíng*); suppression (*jìn*) of desire (*yù*), self-restraint + ‘-ology (*zhǔyì*)’; asceticism; the doctrine that through renunciation of worldly possessions, pleasures and luxuries it is possible to attain a high spiritual state.

Different degrees of asceticism have been practised by spiritual seekers. The *Precept Scripture of Lord Lǎo* (C6th CE) describes the life of an ascetic, whether he is living as a householder, in a monastic institution, or in secluded mountains, forests, or caves:

Male and female disciples of pure faith, be they householders (*zàijiā*, ‘someone living at home’) or recluses (*chūjiā*, ‘someone who has left home’), once they have received the scripture and are following the faith, vow to take delight only in spiritual immortality (*shénxiān*). Day and night they recite (the scripture) – ever seeking the wondrous meaning (of the *Dào*).

Ridding themselves of all agitation and confusion, they bring their minds into harmony and control their inner natures. With soft countenance and benevolent energy (*qì*), they encourage all men and women to do likewise. Far removed from the five evils and steadfastly upholding the five precepts, they continuously worship the three treasures (*sānbǎo*: *jīng*, *qì*, and *shén* – vital essence, life energy, and spirit).

Accepting and fulfilling the will (of the *Dào*), they make no distinction between good times or bad. Upholding all the great precepts, they endure hardship (*kǔxíng*) with steadfastness and zeal. They give tirelessly and generously, sacrificing themselves (*shěshēn*, ‘give one’s life’) to save all living beings.

As they increasingly withdraw from the world, wander about alone, and live in dark seclusion, they meditate (*zhuān xiǎng*) to reach serenity, so that the host of (worldly) troubles cannot touch them. Thus are they bound to attain non-action (*wúwéi*, unforced, selfless, and desireless action).

*Lǎojūn jièjīng*, DZ784 23b–25a; cf. CCED pp.152–53

According to the *Sishíjiǔ zhāngjīng* ('Scripture in Forty-Nine Chapters'), successful ascetic practice leads through a sequence of refinements to emergence of the spirit and union with the *Dào*. This is what constitutes a "real person (*zhēnrén*)":

Miàoxíng Zhēnrén ('Wonderful Practice Real Person') asked the Heavenly Lord, "Who can be called a 'real person (*zhēnrén*)'? What *dào* (way) should one cultivate (*xiū*) to gain this fruit?"

The Heavenly Lord said, "One should practise asceticism (*kǔxíng*) devotedly, give up all mundane desires, permit no false thoughts to arise, be free from defilements and attachments, refine one's bodily form (*xíng*) and convert it into life energy (*qì*), refine the life energy and convert it to spirit (*shén*), and refine the spirit and unite it with the *Dào*. When one's entire being (*tǐ*, embodiment) is dissolved into the original Thusness (*zìrán*, i.e. *Dào*), everything is discovered in this one human body. Through (transformation within) this human body the entire universe is transformed. When one is unrestricted by existence or nonexistence, and when one is forever free from births and deaths – then, one can be called a real person (*zhēnrén*)."

*Sishíjiǔ zhāngjīng* 15, DZ18; cf. SJJT

Extreme ascetic practices can include rigorous self-denial. For a long time after the death of his master, Qiū Chǔjī (C13th) lived the life of an ascetic, keeping his thoughts and actions to a minimum, and reducing his physical needs and wants. According to the *Illustrated Biographies of the Orthodox Immortal Stream of the Gold Lotus*, after becoming a master himself, Qiū lived for the first two years in a small hut near his master's grave, and thereafter continued the life of an ascetic:

After mourning in a graveside hut for two years, he entered the Pánxī Gorge (in Shānxī province, North China) in the fall of the *jiǎwǔ* year (1174 CE). He lived in a cave and begged for one meal per day, going about wearing a grass mantle. People called him Suōyī Xiānshēng ('Mr Grass Mantle'). For six years he went day and night without sleeping. After this, he hid himself in Mt Lóngmén in Lǒngzhōu and performed acts of suffering (*kǔxíng*) as he did in Pánxī.

*Liú Zhìxuán and Xiè Xīchán, Jīnlíán xiàngzhuàn*, DZ174 32b, JY302, in TPEQ p.50



**lā ilāha illā Allāh** (A/P) *Lit.* there is no god (*lā ilāha*) but (*illā*) God (*Allāh*); known as the *tahlīl*; the first part of the Muslim profession of faith (*shahādah*). See **Allāh** (2.1), **Islam** (1.10), **shahādah**.

**lāñchhan(a)** (S/H) *Lit.* mark, symbol, emblem; in Jainism, a mark on the base of an idol of a *Tīrthankara* that helps to identify the *Tīrthankara*; also called a *dhvaja* (mark, emblem, sign). The emblem of Ṛishabha, for example, the first *Tīrthankara* in the present cycle of time according to Jain cosmology, is that of a bull, *ṛishabha* being a term for the male of any species of animal, and hence a bull. Likewise, the symbol used for Mahāvīra, the twenty-fourth and last *Tīrthankara* in the present cycle, is that of a lion; while that of the seventh (Supārshvanātha) is a *svastika*. However, there is some variation between Jain authorities of the past and also between the two main Jain schools – the *Digambaras* and *Shvetāmbaras* – regarding the symbols used to identify each of the twenty-four *Tīrthankaras* of the present cycle of time. The earliest texts make no mention of *lāñchhanas*, and it is probable that they were not used until around the fifth century CE, when they make their first appearance in Jain art, a period that coincides with the final separation of the two schools.<sup>1</sup>

1. See Umakant P. Shah, *Jaina-rūpa-maṇḍana*, JRMU pp.85–88, *passim*.

**Last Day, Last Judgment** See **Day of Judgment**.

**last supper** See **Eucharist**.

**Laylat al-Qadr** (A), **Shab-i Qadr** (P) *Lit.* Night (*Laylat, Shab*) of Power (*Qadr*); Night of Destiny; the night marking Muḥammad's first vision of the mysteries of the Unseen, and his first revelation of the *Qur'ān*; believed to have been one of the last ten nights (sometimes said to have been the last night) of the month of *Ramaḍān* in 610 CE; a night believed to be a time of close communion between the human and the Divine, on which revelations, blessings and divine favours can still be received from heaven. Hence, a vigil is often kept during the last ten nights of *Ramaḍān* as a re-enactment of the time of Muḥammad's first revelation. The term originates in the *Qur'ān*:

Truly, We sent it (the *Qur'ān*) down  
on the Night of Power (*Laylat al-Qadr*)!  
What will convey to you  
what the Night of Power (*Laylat al-Qadr*) is?

The Night of Power (*Laylat al-Qadr*) is  
 more excellent than a thousand months!  
 In it, the angels and the Spirit descend  
 with God's permission, bent upon every errand.  
 Peace there is until the rising of the dawn!

*Qur'ān 97:1–5; cf. AYA, KI*

Among Sufis, the Night of Power means spiritual communion with the divine Beloved during nightly meditation, and that can happen on any night. It implies a mystical vision of deep significance. Rūmī contrasts the “Night of Power” with the “night of the grave” – bodily existence in the material darkness of this world:

Union with Him is the Night of Power (*Shab-i Qadr*),  
 separation from Him, the night of the grave (*shab-i qabr*) –  
 The night of the grave sees miraculous generosity  
 and replenishment from the Night of His Power (*Shab-i Qadr*).

*Rūmī, Divān-i Shams-i Tabrīz 582:6169, KSD2 p.33, in SPL p.233*

Ḥāfiẓ says that for him, every night is the Night of Power:

What the people of retreat (mystics) call  
 the Night of Power (*Shab-i Qadr*) is tonight.  
 O Lord! What constellation is it that heralds such good fortune?

*Ḥāfiẓ, Divān, DHA p.10, DIH p.46; cf. DHWC (26:1) p.80*

Similarly, Ibn al-Fāriḍ writes that union with the divine beloved is his “holy day”, “Night of Power”, or “holy Friday” (the weekly Muslim holy day):

Every day is my holy day,  
 when I see with a clear eye  
 the beauty of her face.  
 Every night is the Night of Power (*Laylat al-Qadr*),  
 when she draws near;  
 And every day we meet is one of union, holy Friday.

*Ibn al-Fāriḍ, Tāʾīyah 355–56, DFQM p.80; cf. SVSL pp.174–75*

Sarmad describes the gift of mystic experience given to him by his master (the “emperor”) as “like the Night of Power (*Shab-i Qadr*)”:

In his grace and generosity,  
 the emperor who rules all has revealed himself to me.

Like the Night of Power (*Shab-i Qadr*)  
 this revelation has given me immeasurable worth.  
 The world is now quite worthless in my eyes.  
*Sarmad, Rubā'īyāt-i Sarmad 223, RIS p.72; cf. SMLD p.283*

Rūmī says that if his writing of the *Mašnavī* “has any value”, it is entirely because his mystical experience illumines all he has to say:

If this black and white (writing) has any value,  
 it comes from the Night of Power (*Shab-i Qadr*)  
 that shone forth like a star.  
 The value of scrip and purse (*hamyān-u kīśah*) is from the gold:  
 without the gold, scrip and purse (*hamyān-u kīśah*) have no worth.  
*Rūmī, Mašnavī III:2533–34; cf. MJR4 p.142*

Since, in the Muslim tradition, the actual date of the Night of Power is uncertain, many nights must be passed in prayer in order to stand a good chance of being present on that particular night. Likewise, the divine beloved makes his coming unpredictable so that the devotees should always be eager for their nightly devotions. Rūmī adds an additional meaning when he says that there is always one realized soul among the many holy men, but the seeker must seek:

Truth is the Night of Power (*Shab-i Qadr*)  
 hidden among other nights,  
 so that the soul may make trial of every night.  
 Not all nights are Nights of Power, O youth,  
 nor are all nights void of that Night.  
 Among the wearers of the dervish cloak,  
 there is one true dervish:  
 Make trial, and accept him that is true.  
*Rūmī, Mašnavī II:2935–37; cf. MJR2 p.373*

Sa‘dī celebrates in verse his meeting with the inner beloved:

How blessed the night and gladder still the day,  
 for auspicious fortune has come out to welcome me.  
 Tell the drummer to give a double roll on the kettledrum  
 in honour of the good tidings:  
 For last night was to me a Night of Power (*Shab-i Qadr*),  
 and today is like a New Year’s festival (*Naw-rūz*).  
 Is this a moon, or an angel, or a human being?  
 Is it you yourself or the world-illuminating sun? ...

I knew that for many a night I enjoyed no repose  
 by reason of my bitter lamentations  
 caused by the pain of your separation.  
 If those nights had not been so dreadful,  
 Sa'dī would not have appreciated the value of this day.  
*Sa'dī, Ṭayyibāt 213:1–3, 6–7, KSSS p.292; cf. TOS pp.290–91*

**Lent** (L. *Quadragesima*) The forty-day period of religious and/or spiritual preparation leading up to the Christian festival of Easter, with variations between different Churches regarding the specific days on which Lent begins and ends; originating as an imitation of the forty-days' fast undergone by Jesus in the wilderness before he assumed his ministry;<sup>1</sup> from the Old English *lencten* (spring); known by various names in different languages, generally using words that either refer to the spring season or are derived from the Latin *Quadragesima* (fortieth). Among Western Churches, Sundays are excluded, and Lent spans six and a half weeks from Ash Wednesday to Good Friday. In Eastern Churches, both Saturdays and Sundays are excluded, and Lent lasts seven weeks.

Forty days, forty nights<sup>2</sup> and forty years<sup>3</sup> are periods that appear at several places in the Hebrew Bible in various connections. Both Moses<sup>4</sup> and the prophet Elijah<sup>5</sup> are said to have fasted for “forty days and forty nights” before being blessed with a vision of God. The number also appears in other contexts,<sup>6</sup> and although the Bible assigns no particular meaning to the number, it clearly has some auspicious implication. In the New Testament, it is said that forty days elapsed between Jesus' resurrection and ascension.<sup>7</sup>

There are variations between the different Churches concerning the observance of Lent. In the Eastern Orthodox Church, for instance, the ‘Great 40 Days (*Megalē Tessarakostē*)’ or ‘Great Fast (*Megalē Nēsteia*)’ is a time not only of fasting (according to monastic rules), but of greater intensity in prayer, penitence, spiritual practices, church attendance, study of the scriptures, works of charity, charitable donations, limitation of entertainment and pleasure, and so on.

In general, Lent is understood as a time of austerity – of various fasting regimes, abstinence from particular foods or pleasures, repentance, penance, preparation for baptism, and increased devotion to religious and spiritual activities. Even some nonbelievers observe Lent as a period of inner consolidation and a time to focus on the non-material side of life. The lay Church historian Socrates of Constantinople (*b.c.*380) reports that in his day, some Churches abstained from all animal foods or from fruit and eggs, while others permitted fish or fowl, and some subsisted entirely on bread. Some fasted for an entire day, others until the mid-afternoon or evening:

It will not perhaps be unseasonable to notice here the diversity of customs in the Churches. The fasts before Easter will be found to be differently observed among different people. Those at Rome fast three successive weeks before Easter, excepting Saturdays and Sundays. Those in Illyrica and all over Greece and Alexandria observe a fast of six weeks, which they term the 'Forty Days' Fast (*Tessarakostē*). Others commencing their fast from the seventh week before Easter, fast for three five-day periods only, at intervals, yet call that time the 'Forty Days' Fast'. It is indeed surprising to me that thus differing in the number of days, they should both give it one common appellation; but some assign one reason for it, and others another, according to their several fancies.

One can see also a disagreement about the manner of abstinence from food, as well as about the number of days. Some wholly abstain from things that have life; others feed on fish only of all living creatures; many together with fish, eat fowl also, saying that according to Moses,<sup>8</sup> these were likewise made out of the waters. Some abstain from eggs, and all kinds of fruits; others partake of dry bread only; still others eat not even this; while others having fasted till the ninth hour, afterwards take any sort of food without distinction. And among various nations there are other usages, for which innumerable reasons are assigned. Since however no one can produce a written command as an authority, it is evident that the apostles left each one to his own free will in the matter, to the end that each might perform what is good, not by constraint or necessity. Such is the difference in the Churches on the subject of fasts.

*Socratēs of Constantinople, Ecclesiastical History 5:22; cf. NPII2 pp.131–32*

Over the centuries, various fasting regimes have been stipulated or suggested by different authorities for observance during Lent. In modern times, Eastern Catholic, Eastern Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox Churches observe a stricter Lent, and prescribe an entirely vegetarian or vegan diet. In modern Western Churches, rules have been gradually relaxed, and nowadays fasting regimes are only prescribed for Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. In many places, fasting regimes are decided locally, according to prevailing circumstances.

A particular festival or liturgical season cannot, in itself, be expected to bestow spiritual inspiration or uplift. Even so, it is possible that the devotional and meditative attitude of mind with which such a festival or season is observed may be conducive to religious or mystical experience. Generally, such experiences will be within the framework of the individual's belief system. Especially among those who are mystically inclined, the long period of Lent, when treated as a period of retreat and more intense spiritual

practice, has sometimes resulted in spiritual experiences. Angela of Foligno, for example, describes how, on one occasion, this resulted in an experience of the great beatitude of the “Trinity”:

During last Lent I found myself altogether in God, without knowing how, and in a way more exalted than was customary for me. I seemed to be in the midst of the Trinity in a more exalted way than I had ever been before; for greater than usual were the blessings I received, and I enjoyed these blessings without interruption. And thus to be absorbed in God filled me with joy and with delight. And feeling myself to be in this beatitude and this great and unspeakable delight – which were above all I had experienced before, such ineffable divine operations took place in my soul, as neither saint nor angel could describe or explain. And I see and understand that these divine operations, that unfathomable abyss, no angel or other creature, however great or wise, could comprehend; and all I say now of it seems to me so ill said that it is blasphemy.

*Angela of Foligno, Book of Divine Consolation; cf. in MSSC p.293*

See also: **chillah**, **Easter**.

1. *Mark* 1:12–13; *Matthew* 4:1–11; *Luke* 4:1–13.
2. *Genesis* 7:12; *Deuteronomy* 9:18, 25; *1 Samuel* 17:16.
3. *Exodus* 16:35; *Deuteronomy* 8:2–5; *Judges* 13:1.
4. *Exodus* 24:18.
5. *1 Kings* 19:8–14.
6. *E.g. Genesis* 18:29; *Deuteronomy* 25:3; *Numbers* 13:25.
7. *Acts* 1:3.
8. *Genesis* 1:20.

**liànjīnshù** (C) *Lit.* art (*shù*) of refining (*liàn*) gold (*jīn*); the art, skill and technique of smelting or refining gold and other precious metals; hence, alchemy. *Jīn* is also a generic term for lustrous and malleable metals.

In the West, alchemy is viewed as a medieval forerunner of modern-day chemistry, and is associated with the pursuit of an elixir that would enable the transmuting of base metals into gold or other precious metals. Chinese alchemy, on the other hand is much older, dating from at least the second century BCE, the practice of which included the search for an elixir of immortality or at least longevity. Chinese alchemists experimented with the carefully controlled baking, first of minerals and later of metals, in a closed crucible. Numerous ‘elixirs of immortality’ were produced, many based upon the red mineral cinnabar (mercuric sulphide), which releases liquid

mercury when roasted and the resulting mercury vapour is condensed. Other elixirs included metals such as gold and silver, or elements like arsenic and sulphur, in combination with plant and animal materials such as medicinal herbs and rhinoceros horn.

In medieval China, spiritual philosophy adopted the terminology of outer alchemy (*wàidān*) as metaphors for various aspects of the spiritual path. Inner alchemy (*nèidān*) thus became associated with the search for the mystical ‘gold elixir (*jīndān*)’ of spiritual immortality. *Wàidān* methods that had involved the uniting of physical materials were understood metaphorically as the harmonious union of *yīn* and *yáng* – referred to, respectively, as mercury and lead.

As the concept of inner spiritual immortality gained prominence over the *wàidān* goal of physical immortality, attempts to manufacture an immortality drug from herbs, minerals and metals were abandoned in favour of inner spiritual practices.

See also: **dān** (8.1), **fāngshì** (7.1), **nèidān** (8.5).

**linga** (S/H) *Lit.* mark, sign, emblem, symbol, form; a distinctive mark or sign; a sectarian mark; an indication; also, the male organ; the phallic symbol as a plain column of stone, signifying creative energy, through which *Shiva* is worshipped; hence, *alinga* (without any distinctive mark or indication), used in descriptions of the supreme Being, whose existence cannot be proven by external signs, indications, logic or reason, but known only by internal experience:

He has no master in this world, nor any lord; He has no sign (*linga*) (by which He can be inferred). He is the Cause, the Lord of the lords of all action. He has neither progenitor nor lord.

*Shvetāshvatara Upanishad 6:9*

Beyond the *Avyakta* (Unmanifested) is the *Purusha* (Being), all-pervading and devoid of all distinctive marks (*alinga*), knowing whom a person is liberated, and obtains immortality.

*Kaṭha Upanishad 2:3.8*

*Linga* is related to the Sanskrit *lāṅgala*, which means both ‘plough’ and ‘phallus’. An alternative, probably fanciful, derivation sees *linga* as derived from two roots, *lī* (to dissolve) and *gam* (to go forth). From this is drawn the meaning that the *linga* is the primal Source from which all things in creation have come into being (‘go forth’), and to which they will return (‘dissolve’, ‘disappear’).

In Indian philosophy, the *linga* stands for all things subtle. Thus, the *linga-sharīra* or *lingātman* is the subtle (*sūkshma*) or astral body, the body of light or subtle energies, of ‘symbols’ or ‘blueprints’ from which the physical body is formed. In the *Nyāya* school, a *linga* is a sign or indication proving that something exists; similarly, in *Mīmāṃsā*, a *linga* is an indication – something that constitutes the basis of an inference.

In temples dedicated to *Shiva*, the deity is usually represented as a *linga* standing on a pedestal, which represents the *yoni* (female genitalia). Their union symbolizes the expression of the divine creative energy. The *linga* is bathed, decked with flowers, and offered foods. *Shiva* is said to have appreciated *linga*-worship, remarking, “He who worships the *linga* knowing it to be the First Cause, the source of consciousness, the substance of the universe, is nearer to me than any other being.”<sup>1</sup>

Mystical symbolism associated with the phallus dates back to remote times in India. A great many phallic icons have been excavated at Mohenjo-daro in the Indus valley, demonstrating the pre-Aryan origin of *linga*-worship. Originally, the Aryans are thought to have abhorred the practice, though with the passage of time it became an established aspect of Aryan worship.

In recent times, a number of Indian scholars have rejected the *linga* as symbolic of the male organ, suggesting instead that it represents a pillar of fire, signifying the subtle, cosmic creative energy of *Shiva*. The representation of the *Shiva-linga* as a phallic symbol is regarded as a degraded and thoughtless interpretation, often associated with tantric literature.

See also: **linga-sharīra** (► 1).

1. *Shiva Purāṇa* 1:18.159, in *MGID* p.227.

**lisān** (A/P) *Lit.* tongue (*lisān*); language; eloquence; hence, *lisānī* (of the tongue, relating to the tongue, repeated with the tongue), as in the reading and recitation of passages from the *Qur’ān*, the offering of prayers, preaching, and vocal repetition of the names of *Allāh*. The term also appears in contexts such as *Lisān al-Ḥaqq* (‘Tongue of God’, ‘Tongue of Truth’) and *Lisān al-Ghayb* (‘Tongue of the Unseen’), epithets given to the well-known fourteenth-century Persian Sufi, Ḥāfiz; *Lisān al-Ghayb*, the last book written by ‘Attār; *dhikr al-lisānī* (recitation with the tongue); and *arbāb al-lisān* (lords of the tongue), which refers to those who speak much but know little.

While repetition or recitation by the tongue can produce uplifting concentration of mind, it has its limitations, and many Sufis have insisted that the *lisān al-qāl* (tongue of speech) must be reduced to silence so that the *lisān al-ḥāl* (tongue of rapture) – the ‘mute eloquence’ of the Sufi – may speak. Hence, the Sufi saying, “the tongue of rapture (*lisān al-ḥāl*) is more eloquent than the tongue of speech (*lisān al-qāl*)”. As Rūmī says:



O my soul and heart, close your mouth  
 and leave off speaking (*guftan*)...  
 In silence, our inner speaking (*guft*) of Him is made more evident,  
 since the desire is increased by suppression...  
 To utter words concerning Him is to shut the windows:  
 the very act of expression conceals Him.

*Rūmī, Maṣnavī VI:695, 697, 699; cf. MJR6 p.296*

Rūzbihān explains how union with the Divine imparts eloquence to the mystic:

Whenever God expands the breast of the mystic who has attained union (*waṣl*) with Him, ... He takes away all impediments from his tongue (*lisān*), so that his physical tongue (*lisān al-ẓāhir*) and his heart's tongue (*lisān al-qalb*) become one. The wisdom and revelation elucidated by his heart, he can now articulate with eloquent expressions and fine phrases. He becomes the possessor of a tongue of wisdom (*ṣāhib al-lisān fī ma'rifah*). His speech becomes spiritual and God speaks through his tongue (*lisān*). God spoke through the tongue (*lisān*) of Moses concerning this, "Loosen the knot in my tongue (*lisān*)." The Prophet in this regard declared: "I was appointed as a Prophet to deliver perfect words," and "I am the most eloquent of the Arabs."

Al-ʿĀrif (the gnostic, al-Ḥallāj) said: "Whenever the mystic's tongue (*lisān al-ʿarīf*) is freed from the human tongue's (*lisān al-insānīyah*) dull-wittedness, the mystic becomes conversant with all of God's mysteries, for his own tongue (*lisān*) is swathed in the illuminations of mystical subtleties."

*Rūzbihān, Mashrab al-Arwāḥ 12:31, MARB p.226; cf. in SSE1 pp.91–92*

See also: **dhikr** (8.5).

**longhouse** A ceremonial building used by the Iroquois and other eastern Native North Americans for meetings, religious or secular; also a designation of the traditional religion of the Iroquois. Rectangular and made of logs, longhouses are quite different from the Plains Indians' dwellings or *tipis*, which were round and made of long tree limbs and animal skins.

**lù** (C) *Lit.* to record, to write down; a collection, record, or register; in Daoism, a record that identifies an individual in this world or in another realm; a register of life and death; also, a list of supernatural beings and protective deities over whom an initiate or monastic can assume control.

In organized Daoist movements from the second century CE onwards, written registers recorded not only births, marriages and deaths, but also

misdeeds. These registers enabled the respective religious organizations to collect taxes in the form of money, unpaid labour, or kind. The various religious movements in China impressed upon their living members the necessity of keeping worldly records up to date, since a mistake could result in ineffective invocations to deities (particularly during healing rituals) or, worse, could lead to a premature summons to the world of the dead. The belief that similar registers are kept and maintained by otherworldly officials has existed since ancient times.

Registers of life and death are frequently mentioned in the texts of the *Shàngqīng* and *Língbǎo* schools. It was believed that these registers were maintained by an otherworldly bureaucracy, presided over by the ‘five ancient lords (*wǔlǎo*) of the Masculine One (*Xiōngyī*)’, a prominent deity in the pantheon of religious Daoism. These ‘ancient lords’ included the ‘director of destinies (*sīmìng*)’ as well as the ‘three offices (*sānguān*)’ of heaven, earth, and humanity, who possessed the power to shorten a person’s life, block advancement through the celestial hierarchy, or downgrade an individual’s destiny, consigning him to the tortures of ‘earth prisons (*dìyù*)’ until merits earned by descendants could secure the individual’s freedom. The registers of life (*shēnglù*) recorded the names of those who had attained divine status, or were destined to reach that exalted stage.

Isabelle Robinet explains:

There are two kinds of registers. The first kind are the registers of life and immortality, which are made of white jade and are inscribed with green or gilded characters. The other kind are the registers of death, which are black and have white characters. . . .

The importance of having one’s name recorded in the registers of immortality is indicated by the fact that all of the texts promise it as a reward for performing the practices they teach. Thus, the *Dàdòng jīng* (‘Book of Great Cavern’, C4th) is embellished with terms signifying that the adept’s name is “erased from the register of death and is engraved on the list of life”, and so forth.

*Isabelle Robinet, Taoist Meditation, TMMS pp.144–45*

Ritual practices relating to these registers are linked to the goal of returning to the Origin (*Dào*):

Practices concerned with “having one’s name erased from the register of death” (that is, expelling the germs of death carried in oneself from the time of birth and having one’s name inscribed on a register of life which involves the recovery of a new ‘jade body’) are complementary with practices which effect a return to the Origin. One of these methods, which is addressed to the planetary deities and makes them

favour the inscription of the adept onto the celestial tablets, is actually called *huíyuán* or the ‘return to the Origin’.

*Isabelle Robinet, Taoist Meditation, TMMS p.151*

A passage in the *Scripture on Salvation* (C5th) refers to one of these ritual practices:

If, in the seventh month, you conduct a long retreat and chant this scripture, you will attain the status of divine transcendent. Where your name is inscribed in all the various heavens on the white slips of the yellow registers (*huánglù*), ‘death’ will be scratched out and ‘life’ written over it.

*Dùrén jīng, DZ87 1:27a, EDSB p.412*

From around the sixth century CE, registers listing protective deities were given to priests and adepts as part of their ordination rites. The length of the list increases with the level of advancement of the adept – from a ‘child register’ (given during the first ordination rite for those aged seven), to a list of 180 deities (given only to masters). Receipt of the registers signifies that priests acquire control over the otherworldly bureaucracy and can relate to the various deities through rituals, meditative visualizations, and inner journeying.

During the first few hundred years CE, some emperors used the belief in registers to strengthen their position by promoting the idea that the registers indicated a mandate from heaven for their earthly rule. In this usage, the *lù* were effectively a form of talisman (*fú*) confirming status and offering protection. Usually, it was claimed that they had been revealed by Lǎozǐ.<sup>1</sup>

See also: **fú**, **shōulù**.

1. See “lu,” *Encyclopedia of Taoism, ET1* pp.39–42 (the source of much in this entry).

**Magahar** (H) A town in the Basti district of Uttar Pradesh, situated on the banks of the river Ami, thirteen miles from Gorakhpur and about one hundred and seventy-five miles northeast of Vārāṇasī, also called Banares and Kāshī (or Kāsi). Though a small town in medieval times, Magahar had a large population of Muslims, predominantly weavers. It was also supposed in those days to have borne a curse – that anyone dying there would be reborn as a donkey. It is said that Kabīr, who was at that time living in the sacred city of Vārāṇasī, purposely went to Magahar when he knew his death was coming, in order to demonstrate the meaninglessness of such beliefs, regarding both Vārāṇasī and Magahar.

Some of Kabīr's disciples had not been able to shake off the deep-rooted idea of the sacredness of Vārāṇasī and the impurity of Magahar. They were shocked and unhappy at their *guru*'s decision. Kabīr has addressed them in a number of his poems:

Brothers, you are simple-minded:  
As water mingles with water,  
    thus will Kabīr mingle with death.  
He who dies at Magahar will not die –  
    he will be free from the bondage of death.  
If he dies elsewhere,  
    he will fail to demonstrate this truth,  
    and bring shame on *Rām*.

You say, "He who dies at Magahar becomes a donkey."  
O you who have lost your faith in *Rām* –  
If Kabīr leaves his body at Kāsi,  
    what credit will it be to *Rām*?

Says Kabīr: Listen, O brothers,  
    let no one be mistaken.  
What difference is there  
    between Kāsi and barren Magahar,  
    if *Rām* is in your heart?

*Kabīr, Bījak, Shabd 103, KSB pp.64–65; cf. KGME p.50*

And again:

Say now, O *Rām*, what shall be my condition?  
People tell me that I was left with little sense  
    when I left Vārāṇasī.  
All my life I wasted in Shivpurī (Vārāṇasī):  
    at the time of death I have shifted to Magahar.  
For many years I did penance at Kāshī (Vārāṇasī);  
Now when it comes to dying,  
    I have come to dwell at Magahar.  
Kāshī and Magahar I consider alike.  
How can one with scanty devotion swim across?  
Says Kabīr, my *guru*, *Gaṇesh*, *Shiva* and all  
    know that Kabīr died uttering the Lord's holy Name.

*Kabīr, Ādi Granth 326, MMS*

If a hard-hearted sinner dies in Vārāṇasī,  
    he cannot escape hell.

If God's saint (*sant*) dies in Haramba (Magahar),  
then he saves all his kindred.

*Kabīr, Ādi Granth 484, AGK*

In Kabīr's time, Magahar was an ill-fated and barren town: besides the blot of unholiness attached to it, there was an acute shortage of water. Ami, the only river running nearby, remained dry except during the rainy season. But it is said that Magahar received two blessings from Kabīr's visit. Firstly, the river began to flow and continued to run throughout the year; secondly, the stigma on Magahar was removed.

See also: **tīrtha**.

**Makkah al-Mukarramah (A), Makkah Mukarramah (A/P), Makkah al-Mu'azzamah (A), Makkah Mu'azzamah (A/P)** *Lit.* Mecca (Makkah) the Blessed (the *al-Mukarramah*); also called by its older name, Bakkah (narrow); the principal city of the Ḥijāz district of Saudi Arabia; the birthplace (c.570 CE) of Muḥammad, where he lived until 622, before moving to Madīnah because of local hostility. According to the *Qur'ān*, "The first house (of worship) appointed for men was at Bakkah: full of blessing and of guidance for all the worlds."<sup>1</sup>

Mecca is now a place of Muslim pilgrimage, which – according to the *Qur'ān*<sup>2</sup> – every devout Muslim is bound to visit at least once in his or her lifetime so long as physically and financially able to do so, and provided the visit does not result in family hardship.

The pilgrimage to Mecca is known as a *ḥajj*, performed from the eighth to the twelfth of the month of *Dhū al-Ḥijjah*, and includes circumambulation of the *Ka'bah*, a sacred shrine in the Sacred Mosque in Mecca, together with various other rites spanning several days. *Ḥajj* is called the greater pilgrimage (*ḥajj al-akbar*) to contrast it with *ʿumrah*, the lesser pilgrimage (*ḥajj al-aṣghar*), which can be performed at any time of the year, and which takes only an hour or so after arrival in Mecca.

Prior to Islam, Mecca was a great centre, famous for its vast fairs, festivals, and gatherings. Before the time of Muḥammad, other Arabian towns, such as Minā and ʿUkāz, or those with sacred sites similar to the *Ka'bah*, tried unsuccessfully to rival Mecca, but none could draw the crowds to the same degree, nor equal Mecca in religion or commerce.

Many Sufis, in accordance with their Muslim faith, made the pilgrimage to Mecca. Others, however, maintained that the real pilgrimage is to the divine Beloved within. Many Sufis gave symbolic, spiritual interpretations to the performance of *ḥajj* and to the various rites associated with it. Mecca itself, however, is only occasionally used symbolically, when it generally refers to the spiritual place of pilgrimage, the divine Beloved. Speaking of the Beloved as the divine Mistress, Ibn al-Fāriḍ writes:

And so wherever She alights among God's many lands,  
 though it cool my eye, I see it not, but Mecca.  
 Any place that holds Her is a precinct holy:  
 every house where She resides is the House of Holiness.

*Ibn al-Fāriḍ, Tā'īyah 357–58, DFQM p.80; cf. SVSL pp.176–77*

Here, the “House of Holiness (*Bayt al-Muqaddas*)” is an Arabic name for Jerusalem. Likewise, the Punjabi Sufi, Bulleh Shah, casting the divine beloved as Rānjhā, hero of a famous love story, writes:

The *ḥājjīs* go to Mecca, my Mecca is my dear Rānjhā.

*Bulleh Shāh, Kullīyāt 56, KBS p.108, SBSU p.304, BSPS p.350*

*Ḥājjīs* are those who have undertaken the pilgrimage to Mecca.

See also: **ḥajj**, **Islam** (1.10), **Ka'bah**, **mī'rāj**.

1. *Qur'ān* 3:96.

2. *Qur'ān* 3:97.

**mālā** (S/H/Pu), **phreng ba** (T), **mán** (C), **man** (J) *Lit.* garland, wreath, rosary; row, line, chain; collection, group; a string of beads, a necklace; in Hindu, Jain and Buddhist traditions, a rosary used to count the repetition of a prayer or *mantra*; also, a collection of words (a *mantra*) arranged in some particular order, or a collection of stories, as in the Buddhist *Jātaka-mālā* (‘Garland of Birth Stories’); also called a *japamālā* (recitation rosary).

As a rosary, a *mālā* is a string of beads used in the practice of *japa* (recitation, repetition) of a fixed number of prayers or *mantras*, usually 108 (an auspicious number in Indian lore). The rosary can be made of wood, stones, gemstones, metal, bones, nut kernels, seeds, crystal or other materials, especially the berries of *rudrāksha* (*Elaeocarpus ganitrus*) or *tulsī* (holy basil, *Ocimum tenuiflorum*). The perforations are believed to provide places for spirits. Garlands are also made with auspicious flowers, and are worn at festivals and weddings. They are also used to honour guests, and as symbols of victory.

In Buddhism, the number of beads varies according to the tradition. Generally, rosaries have the standard 108 beads, although Pure Land rosaries often have 27, while Tibetan Buddhist rosaries (which are used extensively) can have 111. The number 111 arises from the presumption that one in ten rounds of the rosary will be defective. 100 rounds therefore require an additional ten, and the extra ten require one more, making 111 in all.

In Jainism, the 108 beads represent the 108 attributes of the five *paramesh-thins*, the five classes of great beings who are deemed worthy of worship.

The prayers or *mantras* repeated can be associated with breath control and breathing exercises. Common among them is the *namaskāra mantra*, an ancient Prakrit sacred formula used as a prayer of homage, obeisance and salutation invoking the five *parameshṭhins*. Attention can be focused at the solar plexus, the heart, or the centre between the eyebrows. Different *mālās*, often divined by astrological means, may be deemed appropriate for different mental or physical conditions.

See also: **japa** (8.5).

**mānasik(a) pūjā** (S/H), **mānasik(a) dhyān(a)** (S/H), **mānsik pūjā**, **mānsik dhyān** (H) *Lit.* mental (*mānasika*) worship (*pūjā*); mental contemplation (*dhyāna*); a refined form of idol worship in which the practitioner creates a mental image of his chosen deity. In his mind, he bathes and dresses it, decorates it with fineries, garlands it with flowers, offers delicacies to it, prostrates before it, and so on. All this requires the development of considerable powers of concentration, which may confer some degree of bliss upon the practitioner, depending upon the love, devotion and inherent temperament of the individual.

However, even if the practitioner contemplates an image of some past saint or mystic in a painting or photograph, the worship is still one of the individual's own mental imagination, and of itself would be unable to take the soul beyond the thinking and imaginative faculty.

An amusing tale is told of the mystic Kabīr and the relationship with his adopted master, Rāmānand. Rāmānand practised *mānsik pūjā*, and according to the legend, it was his association with Kabīr that slowly led him to change his ways. V.K. Sethi tells the story:

Though he always respected his *guru*, Kabīr never subscribed to Rāmānand's traditional beliefs. It is said that Kabīr's association gradually effected a change in his *guru*'s outlook. Every day Rāmānand used to perform *mānsik* or mental worship of his deity, *Rām*. He would form a mental picture of the idol, bathe it, decorate it with fineries, and offer delicacies to it. One day he was sitting inside his house engaged in worship, while Kabīr was waiting outside the entrance to convey his respects to the *guru* through the curtain.

Rāmānand made a slip in his worship: He forgot to put the garland of flowers around the deity's neck before placing the crown on its head. He was perplexed because the circumference of the garland in his mental picture was not large enough to go round the crown, and it was an act of disrespect to remove the headpiece. Kabīr called to him from outside, "*Gurudev*, untie the knot of the garland, and then tie it around the idol's neck."

Rāmānand was startled. How could Kabīr know of his predicament? Apparently this low-caste disciple was no ordinary person. The venerable sage called out to one of his disciples, “Remove the curtain, for what can one hide from Kabīr?” Ushered into his presence, Kabīr respectfully bowed to his master, but Rāmānand stood up and embraced him.

The barrier between the master and his disciple was thus removed, and Rāmānand became more receptive to Kabīr’s teachings.

*V.K. Sethi, Kabīr – Weaver of God’s Name, KWGN pp.11–12*

It is said that this form of mental worship of idols was commonly practised in *tretā-yuga*.

See also: **dhyāna** (8.5), **pūjā**.

**maṇḍal(a)** (S/H/Pu), **dkyil ‘khor** (T), **màntúluó** (C), **mandara** (J) *Lit.* round, circular; anything circular or circumscribed, such as an orbit, a halo, a zone, a disc, a division, a part of something, a society, and so on. The word has acquired a wide spread of meaning:

1. Circle, orb, sphere, disc, globe, wheel, ring, circumference, revolution, path or orbit (of a heavenly body), halo (of the sun or moon), the horizon; a compass; something circular or understood to be circular (*e.g.* *maṇḍala* of the moon, *maṇḍala* of the universe); a division, a segment, a domain, a region, a realm; a society, an association, a department, a collection, an assemblage, a group, a company.
2. A district, a province.
3. A division of the *Ṛig Veda*, the whole collection being divided into ten *maṇḍalas* – ‘song circles’ or ‘song cycles’ – or eight *ashṭakas*.
4. An inner realm, sphere or region, as in the term, *gagan maṇḍal* (sphere of the sky), which is the ‘sky’ or upper part of the inner realm called *trikuṭī*; or as in *sūrya maṇḍala* (region of the sun) or *chandra maṇḍala* (region of the moon), both being subtle realms just above the physical; or as a term for the six *chakras* (subtle centres) within the human body or the five physical *tattvas* (subtle essences of matter).
5. A kind of diagram used as a means of concentration and for invoking a divinity, probably originating in pre-tantric times as simple circles drawn on the ground for ritual purposes.



In the latter context, *maṇḍalas* have become symbolic diagrams with a mystical significance, often complex, constructed of coloured squares, circles, triangles and other designs, and used for a variety of purposes, including worship and meditation. Usually symmetrical about their centre point, the overall shape may be square, rectangular, circular, oblong, or in the shape of a lotus or other design. They are frequently beautiful, detailed, artistic masterpieces, with intricate designs, vibrant colours and amazing images of balancing elements symbolizing the unity and harmony of the cosmos. The various spaces within the *maṇḍala* represent the heavenly or terrestrial abodes of deities. These deities, of which there may be a few or several hundred, are invoked by *mantras* and other rituals, by which means, especially in tantric practice, they are believed to enter the place in the *maṇḍala* assigned to them. Offerings of precious stones, grains of wheat and other foods, or even pebbles and sand may also be made. The deities inhabiting the *maṇḍala* are also thought to enter the body of the spiritual practitioner during concentrated meditation. In tantrism, the *maṇḍala* is often a specialized and complex geometrical design referred to as a *yantra* (instrument, engine) that is used in worship. Each god or goddess worshipped has a *yantra* of his or her own in a design that is full of symbolism.

The symbolic significance of the design elements increases the closer they are to the centre. In Buddhism, especially tantric Buddhism (*Vajrayāna*), the *buddha*, celestial *bodhisattva* or deity that is the primary focus of the *maṇḍala* generally occupies the centre. This central deity may be of three types: peaceful, symbolizing a particular virtue, such as the compassion of the celestial *buddha* Avalokiteshvara or the wisdom of the celestial *bodhisattva* Mañjuśrī; wrathful though benevolent, representing the inner struggle to overcome the imperfections that stand as obstacles on the path to enlightenment; or, lastly, depicted using sexual imagery, with male and female elements, symbolizing duality – the limitless number of opposites, positive and negative, good and evil, all seeking bliss and peace in union, in oneness.

*Maṇḍalas* may be simple or elaborate. Some may be constructed of gold or silver, or of less precious metals or materials; others may be made of wood or stone. They can be temporary, created for a particular ritual out of sand, flour, coloured powders, or even butter, as in Tibet. Some may be large and constructed in three dimensions, such that worshippers can enter the *maṇḍala*. Entire stupa and temple complexes have also been created in the form of a *maṇḍala*. The magnificent Swayambhunāth stupa and temple complex, for example, built on a hilltop in the valley of Kathmandu (Nepal), is a *Vajrayāna* (tantric Buddhist) complex, built as an architectural *maṇḍala*, each of its many aspects replete with symbolic meaning.

Equally impressive is Borobudur, a *Mahāyāna* stupa and temple complex in Java, the biggest Buddhist temple in the world. Built probably in the eighth and ninth centuries, and hidden for several hundred years beneath volcanic ash and jungle invasion, it was rediscovered in the nineteenth century and

restored during the twentieth. Now a popular pilgrimage site, it is estimated that Borobudur must have taken around seventy-five years to build. In its totality, it is thought to symbolize the three worlds (of desire, form, and formlessness) and the spiritual stages (*bhūmi*) traversed by a *bodhisattva*. Borobudur is constructed as a giant three dimensional *maṇḍala* consisting of six square platforms topped by three circular ones, and decorated with 2,672 relief panels and 504 *buddha* statues. At the top, the main central dome is surrounded by 72 *buddha* statues, each seated inside a perforated stupa.<sup>1</sup> The traditional *buddhas* of the four directions occupy the first four platforms of the stupa: Akshobhya (east), Ratnasambhava (south), Amitābha (west), and Amoghasiddhi (north). On the fifth platform, the primal *buddha*, Vairocana, adorns all sides. Visitors who circumambulate the stupa are presented with scenes from Buddha's life, tales of his past births, and extracts from *Mahāyāna sūtras*. Ascending from the bottom of the stupa to the top is said to symbolize the journey from the world of *samsāra* to *nirvāṇa*.

More generally, *maṇḍalas* are painted on cloth and hung on temple walls, or painted directly onto the walls as murals. Descriptions of *maṇḍalas* are found in tantric literature, such as Abhayākara Gupta's *Vajrāvalī* and *Nishpannā-yogāvalī*, dating from the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries (CE). The first describes pre-initiation rituals into the cult of the particular deity associated with a *maṇḍala*. The second contains detailed descriptions of twenty-seven *maṇḍalas* drawn from various tantric texts.

Tibetan *maṇḍalas* come in a variety of forms. The two most commonly seen are: the womb *maṇḍala* (S. *garbha-dhātu*), in which the movement is from the One to the many; and the diamond world (S. *vajra-dhātu*), in which the movement is from the many to the One. Constructing a *maṇḍala* is an art. In Tibet, it takes a monk several years of training not only to learn the skill itself but also to learn the philosophy and the teachings underlying the art. It might take several days and even several weeks for four monks to make a sand *maṇḍala*, which usually starts at the centre and expands to the perimeter, symbolizing the evolution of the One into the many. Once completed, one of the monks is put in charge of destroying it, signifying the impermanence of this world. The other monks sweep the sand into running water thus diffusing the energies of the *maṇḍala* to the whole universe.

In some Chinese and Japanese schools of tantric Buddhism, such as *Zhēnyán* and *Shingon*, during the course of his initiation (*abhisheka*) under the instruction of his master, the disciple stands upon a *maṇḍala* that represents the entire cosmos and its many worlds. Entering a *maṇḍala* and progressing to its centre symbolizes the meditator's journey through the cosmos to the ultimate Reality. The different sectors of the *maṇḍala* are associated with various *buddhas* and *bodhisattvas*. By dropping or throwing a flower onto the *maṇḍala*, the disciple associates himself with a particular *buddha* or *bodhisattva*, from whom he will receive initiation (*abhisheka*) and protection.

Thereafter, as directed by his master, the student uses specific *āsanas* (postures), *mantras*, *mudrās* (gestures) and visualization of his *maṇḍala* and associated *buddha* or *bodhisattva* in rituals and meditation. This concentrated visualization allows the student, over time, to impress a detailed mental image of his protector *buddha* or deity in his mind that he can recall vividly during his practice, with the understanding that his protector symbolizes his own inherent buddhahood. This will ultimately lead him to merge his body, mind and speech in the *buddha* until he becomes one with him.

Among the best-known *maṇḍalas* are those depicting a group of the eight most celebrated *bodhisattvas* of the *Mahāyāna* school, assembled around the central figure of one of the three main *buddhas* namely: the historical Buddha and the celestial *buddhas*, Amitābha, and Vairochana. Another well-known form of *maṇḍala* portrays the five celestial *buddhas*, with Vairochana in the centre surrounded by Akshobhya, Ratnasambhava, Amitābha, and Amoghasiddhi.

*Maṇḍalas* are said to exist at three levels. At the physical, representational level, the Buddha generally appears at the centre of a series of concentric circles, in which various deities and *bodhisattvas* (aspirants) are depicted, together with other symbolic imagery, representing aspects of *saṃsāra* (the world), *nirvāṇa* (enlightenment), the heavenly worlds, and so on. Some *maṇḍalas* are specific to and are used to invoke the power of a particular deity. Others represent the entire universe, according to mythological tradition, and there are many variations on all these themes. The seven point *maṇḍala* (T. *mandal so bdun ma*), for instance, represents Mount Meru, the four continents, and the sun and the moon of Indian cosmological mythology.

At the mental level, a meditational *maṇḍala* (*samādhi-maṇḍala*) may be inwardly visualized by a monk during contemplation. At the idealized level of the intrinsically existent *maṇḍala* (*svabhāva-maṇḍala*), the reality depicted by a physical *maṇḍala*, such as the characteristics of enlightenment, is believed to have a real existence.

A Buddhist *maṇḍala* also represents the body, speech and mind of a *buddha*, and some *maṇḍalas* focus specifically on one of these three aspects: a body *maṇḍala*, in which the Buddha, the deities and *bodhisattvas* are represented by their bodily characteristics; a speech *maṇḍala*, in which they are represented by their speech using seed-syllables (*bīja-mantras*); and a mind *maṇḍala*, in which their mental vows are represented using symbols such as lotuses, wheels, swords, stupas (for housing relics), *mudrās* (gestures), and *vajras* (a symbolic instrument in tantric Buddhism).

*Maṇḍalas*, as symmetrical and complex circular shapes and designs, can be found everywhere in nature and in the universe. Examples abound among plants, sea creatures, animal life, celestial objects, and in the atomic and subatomic realms. From a cell seen under a microscope, to a sunflower, a lotus flower, a cross-section of a kiwi fruit, a slice of onion, a spider's web, a nautilus, a cross-section of a tree trunk, a snow flake, a pine cone, and spiral

galaxies – all can be perceived as examples of natural *maṇḍalas*. Such forms and designs are given spiritual and ritual significance in many religions and cultures, including Hindu, Buddhist, Christian, Muslim, Native American (North and South), Australian Aboriginal, Aztec, and Mayan.

In recent times, Carl Jung (1875–1961), the renowned Swiss psychiatrist and psychoanalyst, used *maṇḍalas* as part of a therapeutic technique to understand both the conscious and unconscious mind. He would ask his patients to draw imaginary *maṇḍalas*, in the belief that the drawing would reveal secrets that would allow him to understand the unconscious self. He also drew his own *maṇḍalas*, which he believed enabled him to identify emotional imbalance and work towards growth and wholeness in his own personality.

See also: **stūpa**, **Vajrayāna** (►4), **yantra**.

1. See “Borobudur,” *Wikipedia*, ret. November 2015.

**mandir(a)** (S/H), **mandar** (Pu), **deval** (H) *Lit.* habitation, abode, house, palace, temple; a term used especially in Hindu and Jain traditions for external places of worship and prayer.

Although a visit to a temple may have a positive effect upon the mind, Indian *sants* have observed that the true temple of God, where He can actually be found, is the human body. God, they say, can be realized within the human body by practising an appropriate form of meditation. Kabīr indicates that God is not to be found in any of the common outward places, forms, or practices:

Where do you seek me, my friend,  
when I am so near to you?

I am neither in pilgrimage places (*tīrth*),  
nor in idols nor solitary living!

I am neither in the temple (*mandir*) nor the mosque (*masjid*),  
neither *Ka'bah* nor Kailāsh!

I am neither in recitation (*jap*) nor austerities (*tap*),  
neither rites nor fasting!

I dwell not in rituals (*kriyā karm*),  
nor in *yoga* or renunciation (*sanyās*).

*Kabīr, Shabdāvalī, KSS1 (6) pp.90–91, SKSM (266) p.111; cf. in SSII pp.168–69*

Guru Nānak maintains:

He alone knows the home (*ghar*) of his own heart  
and the door (*dar*) to the temple (*mandar*),  
who obtains perfect understanding from the *guru*.

*Guru Nānak, Ādi Granth 1039, AGK*

And Tulsī Sāhib, in a poem written for a Muslim *shaykh*, says that God is not to be found in any external buildings, whether mosque or temple, but in the natural temple of the body:

What a pity that dwellers in the natural mosque (*masjid*)  
visit fake temples (*mandir*) and mosques (*masjid*),  
only to suffer in misery.

*Tulsī Sāhib, Sant Bānī, SBHB p.44*

See also: **ārātrika**, **mūrti**, **pūjā**.

**manes** The spirits of dead ancestors in Roman mythology, often revered as minor deities; literally, ‘good ones’ (probably), from the Latin *manus* (good). See **ancestor worship**.

**mangal(a)** (S/Pa/H), **bkra shis** (T), **jíxiáng** (C), **kichijō** (J) *Lit.* happiness, felicity, bliss, blessedness; luck, good fortune; something favourable, propitious, or auspicious; a good omen; anything conducive to happiness and prosperity or that leads to a good outcome; hence, a blessing or benediction; the converse of *amangala* (S. ill omen, bad luck); also, in general, superstition; any of the eight auspicious things (*aṣṭa-mangala*), of which there are several lists in Jain, Buddhist, and Hindu traditions; in Buddhism, any of the variously listed 32, 108 or 132 auspicious signs or marks of a *buddha* carved into a *buddhapāda* (a carving in stone, wood or metal, or a painted representation, of the sole of a *buddha*’s foot). Illustrating the often inconsistent nature of mythology, the planet Mars is known in Hindu astrology as *Mangala*, the god of war and purveyor of esoteric doctrines. In Vedic astrology, he is believed to exert a malignant influence.

*Mangala* also appears in terms like *mangalācharaṇa* (benediction, a prayer for the success of some undertaking, as on the opening pages of a book), *mangala-kāla* (an auspicious time or occasion), *mangala-graha* (an auspicious planet, a lucky star), *mangala-pura* (city of prosperity), *mangala-dhvani* (an auspicious sound), and so on.

It is also a part of expressions such as *diṭṭha-mangala* (Pa. auspicious sighting), which refers to the ancient Indian superstition in the coming of good or bad fortune according to something seen. This would include the sighting of “anything with a lucky look, such as a red fish, a pregnant woman, a completely white bull, a brimful water jar”, and so on. A *diṭṭha-mangalika* is hence a person who believes in such omens. *Diṭṭha-mangala* also refers to the Indian belief that desires can be fulfilled merely by the sight of something regarded as holy or sacred, such as a holy man, a particular shrine or temple, and so forth. Similarly, *suta-mangala* (Pa) refers to superstition attached

to the hearing of particular sounds. Sounds of laughter and happiness, or “hearing words such as ‘full’, ‘full grown’, ‘growing’, and ‘eat’” are taken as good omens, while hearing the sounds of weeping and mourning are bad omens. To hear the call of an owl is also regarded as a good omen, while to hear the cry of some other night birds is bad. Likewise, *muta-mangala* (Pa) relates to touch and to particular smells. If a person, “rising early, touches the earth, green grass, fresh cow dung, a clean garment, a red fish, gold or silver, or food”, these are regarded as good omens. A sweet smell or pleasant touch are also regarded as good omens, while the converse are bad.<sup>1</sup>

Similar superstitions are associated with the notion of auspicious or inauspicious days for the holding of particular functions, perhaps calculated according to astrological considerations. Commonly included among such functions are marriages, naming ceremonies, the laying of foundation stones, or ceremonies conducted at the beginning of some business or other enterprise.

In the short *Mangala Sutta* (‘Discourse on the Auspicious’ or ‘Discourse on Blessings’) in Pali, the Buddha also speaks of a number of virtues, spiritual practices and attainments as auspicious blessings (*mangala*). Such things are regarded as auspicious because they lead to happiness and well-being in this life, and to *nibbāna* (enlightenment and liberation), or at least a better life, in a future birth. In this context, *mangala* has been variously translated as ‘auspiciousness’, ‘blessing’, and ‘protection’.<sup>2</sup> Rather than decry the notion of auspicious things or omens as mere superstition, the Buddha adopts a positive approach and indicates those things that can truly be regarded as blessings or matters of good fortune:

The Blessed One was once staying at Anāthapiṇḍika’s monastery, in Jetavana (‘Jeta’s Grove’), near Sāvathī. Now when the night was far spent, a certain deity – whose surpassing radiance lit up the entire Jetavana – approached the Blessed One. Drawing near, he bowed down to him, and then stood to one side. Standing there, he addressed the Blessed One in verse:

Many deities and human beings, desiring happiness (*sothāna*),  
have given thought to (the nature of) blessings (*mangala*).  
Tell me, then, what is the greatest blessing (*mangala*)?

To this the Buddha replied:

Not to associate with the foolish,  
but to associate with the wise,  
and paying homage to those worthy of homage –  
That is the greatest blessing (*mangala*).

To live in a congenial place,  
 to have accumulated merit in the past,  
 and to conduct oneself rightly –  
 That is the greatest blessing (*mangala*).

Broad knowledge, craftsmanship,  
 well-trained in self-discipline, and well-spoken –  
 That is the greatest blessing (*mangala*).

To support one's mother and father,  
 to cherish one's wife and children,  
 and to be engaged in an occupation free of disharmony –  
 That is the greatest blessing (*mangala*).

Generosity, right living, assisting relatives,  
 and performing blameless actions –  
 That is the greatest blessing (*mangala*).

Ceasing from and avoiding evil, abstaining from intoxicants,  
 and steadfastness in virtue –  
 That is the greatest blessing (*mangala*).

Respect, humility, contentment, gratitude,  
 and hearing the *Dhamma* at appropriate times –  
 That is the greatest blessing (*mangala*).

Patience, compliance, association with holy men (*samaṇas*),  
 and discussion of the *Dhamma* at appropriate times –  
 That is the greatest blessing (*mangala*).

Self-control, a holy life, comprehension of the noble truths,  
 and the realization of *nibbāna* –  
 That is the greatest blessing (*mangala*).

A mind that, when touched by the vagaries of life,  
 remains unruffled, free from sorrow, stainless, and at rest –  
 That is the greatest blessing (*mangala*).

Those who live in this way  
 are (inwardly) unassailable wherever they may go,  
 going everywhere in happiness –  
 For them, that is the greatest blessing (*mangala*).

*Sutta Nipāta* 2:4, *Mangala Sutta*, PTSN pp.46–47;  
 cf. KNNR, BPPT pp.34–35, KNTB, in PDB p.525



The *Mangala Sutta* expresses a wise perception of human life, and many Pali commentaries, often substantial, have been written on its few verses. The *Mangala Sutta* is also included among the Pali *paritta suttas* ('protection discourses'). *Paritta* also means a 'protective charm', and there are several collections of *paritta* texts in existence. It is generally believed in Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia that recitations from these texts, some of which are simple prayers for protection and good fortune, will bring happiness and prosperity, and provide protection from a wide variety of misfortunes. As a consequence, they are often recited at Buddhist ceremonies such as births, name givings, weddings, funerals, house blessings, and so on. Sometimes, the monks who perform these ceremonies are physically connected to the participants by a length of string, along which blessings and protection are believed to flow from the officiating monk to the participants. Various ritual items, including a water pot, are tied to the string, and when the ceremony is ended, the water is sprinkled on the participants, and pieces of the string are tied around their necks or wrists.<sup>3</sup>

Other 'auspicious' texts found in these anthologies include the *Ratana Sutta* ('Jewel Discourse') and the *Mettā Sutta* ('Discourse on Lovingkindness') – both in the *Sutta Nipāta* – and the *Ātānātiya Sutta* ('Discourse on the *Ātānātiya* Protective Spell') from the *Dīgha Nikāya*. Nonetheless, in the *Mangala Sutta*, the Buddha is clear that it is possession and practice of the virtues he mentions that can be regarded as blessings, something that the chanting of the verses will not of itself confer.

The same approach to superstitious beliefs is apparent in the *Mangala Jātaka* and the *Mahāmangala Jātaka*, the non-canonical *Jātakas* (birth stories) containing incidents from the previous lives of the Buddha. The narrative of the *Mangala Jātaka*<sup>4</sup> concerns a wealthy *brāhmaṇ* merchant who believes that he is able to make predictions from pieces of cloth. The merchant also believes that any cloth, however new or expensive, will become inauspicious (*amangala*) and bring ill luck upon the house in which it rests if it is gnawed by mice. When, therefore, he discovers mouse damage to a suit of clothes that he had left lying on a chest, he asks his son to dispose speedily of the clothes in a cemetery – carrying them there on the end of a stick ("as if they were a house snake"), so that he should not touch them. The Buddha, becoming aware through his inner vision of what has happened and knowing, too, that the father and son are predestined for enlightenment, goes to the cemetery to meet the boy. When the boy discards the clothes, the Buddha picks them up for his own use, despite the protests of the child, declaring them to be just what he needs.

When the boy reports the incident to his father, the merchant – fearful that even the Buddha will be subject to misfortune – hastens to find the Buddha in order to offer him "a large number of robes", saying to himself, "Those clothes are bewitched and accursed. Even the sage Gautama cannot wear them without destruction befalling him; and that would bring me into disrepute. I will give



the sage an abundance of alternative garments and get him to throw that suit away.” But when offered the new clothes, the Buddha responds, “*Brāhmaṇ*, I have openly declared that I have renounced the world and am content with the rags that lie by the roadside or at bathing places, or are thrown away on rubbish heaps or in a cemetery. You, however, have held your superstitions in previous births, as well as at the present time.” At the *brāhmaṇ*’s request, the Buddha then relates a similar tale of the *brāhmaṇ*’s previous life, in which the *brāhmaṇ* realizes the truth and is freed from his superstitions.

The *Mahāmangala Jātaka*<sup>5</sup> opens with an incident in which an irresolvable dispute arises concerning whether *diṭṭha-mangala*, *suta-mangala* and *muta-mangala* (omens of sight, hearing, and touch) are true omens. When asked to resolve the dispute, the Buddha explains the matter by relating the story of a previous life in which he had been a *bodhisatta* (S. *bodhisattva*) aspiring to enlightenment, living as a hermit in the Himalayas. In the story, his disciples leave the mountains during the rainy season and descend to Vārāṇasī, where are asked to resolve a dispute concerning the nature of true omens. They reply that they will ask their master. On their return, the *bodhisatta* answers in verses that, like the *Mangala Sutta* of the *Sutta Nipāta*, speak of human virtues as the greatest blessing (*sothhāna*). In eight verses, he identifies eight kinds of people who may be regarded as blessings in this world:

1. He who conducts himself with respect and kindness towards deities and ancestors, and all other beings, is a blessing (*sothhāna*) to all creatures.
2. He who expresses cheerfulness and goodwill to all, even to antagonists, whether they are men or women, family or otherwise, is a blessing (*sothhāna*) to all who know him.
3. He who possesses brightness and clarity of mind, never looking down upon his friends, and never proud of his birth, caste, wealth or wisdom, is a blessing (*sothhāna*) to all his companions.
4. He who seeks friendship among good and honest people, is trusted by them, has no poison in his tongue and is generous to all good people, causing harm to none, is a blessing (*sothhāna*) to his friends (*mitta*).
5. He whose wife is faithful, virtuous, good-natured, devoted, of a similar age, from a good family and who bears many children knows the blessing (*sothhāna*) that a good wife can bring.
6. He whose king is a mighty lord of beings, who lives purely and is all-powerful, and yet of whom he can sincerely say, “He is my friend,” knows the blessing (*sothhāna*) that a good king can bring.

7. He who is a true believer, is always good, is generous with food and drink, flowers, garlands and perfumes, whose mind is always at peace, and who spreads joy wherever he goes, is a blessing (*soṭṭhāna*) to all the heavens.
8. Those good and wise men, fortified by a tranquil life, whom virtuous sages exert much effort to purify are blessings (*soṭṭhāna*) among *arahantas* (worthy ones, enlightened ones).

The *bodhisatta* concludes by contrasting superstitions with true blessings, adding that blessings such as these are valued in this world by the wise, and that prudent men will adopt them. “But in omens (*mangala*), there is no truth at all.”

See also: **ashṭa-mangala, paritrāṇa.**

1. *Jātaka* 4:453, *Mahāmangala Jātaka*, *PTSJ4* pp.72–73, *JSBB4* pp.46–47; see also Venerable Mahasi Sayadaw, on *Sammāparibbājanīya Sutta*, *DSPS*.
2. See *Sutta Nipāta* 2:4, *Mangala Sutta*, *PTSN* pp.46–47, in e.g. *BPPT* pp.34–35, *KNTB*, *KNNR*, “Maṅgalasutta,” *PDB*.
3. See “paritta,” *Oxford Dictionary of Buddhism*, *ODB*.
4. *Jātaka* 1:87, *Mangala Jātaka*, *PTSJ1* pp.371–74; cf. *JSBB1* pp.215–17.
5. *Jātaka* 4:453, *Mahāmangala Jātaka*, *PTSJ4* pp.72–78, *JSBB4* pp.46–49.

**ma ni 'khor lo** (T) *Lit.* jewel (*ma ni*) wheel (*'khor lo*); prayer wheel, *maṇi* wheel; a Tibetan Buddhist device in the shape of a vertical, hollow cylinder that spins upright on a central spindle; also known as *chos 'khor* (wheel of *dharmā*), while a smaller, handheld prayer wheel is a *lag 'khor* (hand wheel). *Ma ni 'khor lo* is a contraction of *ma ni chos 'khor lo* (jewel wheel of *dharmā*).

On the outside of the cylinder is written a *mantra*, often along with images of deities and the eight auspicious symbols (*ashṭa-mangala*). The central spindle of a prayer wheel may have *mantras* written on it and may also have a long scroll of paper wrapped around it, on which a *mantra* is written hundreds, thousands, or even hundreds of thousands of times, depending upon the volume of the cylinder. The cylinder and spindle can be made of a variety of materials, including wood, metal, stone, leather, and coarse cotton. The *mantras*, images and symbols are cast, embossed, inscribed, engraved or painted on the outside, according to the nature of the material and the manner in which the prayer wheel has been manufactured. The small cylinder of a handheld prayer wheel is generally mounted on a vertical handle, and a cord or chain with a weight on the end (*i.e.* a governor) is tied to the cylinder to make it easier to start the rotations, to stabilize the rotation and to keep it in motion for longer. Very large wheels, turned by handles on the lower end

of the cylinder, have been installed in some monasteries, which – in small monasteries – can occupy a considerable proportion of the floor space.

*Ma ni* (S. *maṇi*) comes from the popular Tibetan *mantra*, “*Auṃ maṇi padme hūṃ* (S. *Auṃ*, homage to the jewel in the lotus),” which is the *mantra* most commonly used in the prayer wheel. The *mantra* is attributed to Avalokiteshvara (T. Chenrézig), the *bodhisattva* of compassion, who is greatly revered in Tibet. This *mantra* is especially venerated by the devotees of the Dalai Lama, who is understood to be an incarnation of Avalokiteshvara. The *maṇi* is commonly regarded as the mythical *chintāmaṇi* (wish-fulfilling gem), and is normally believed to signify the treasure of enlightenment hidden in the lotus of human consciousness. *Auṃ* on its own is also used as a *mantra*, and the uplifting sound of a congregation of Buddhist monks intoning the single syllable is a never-to-be-forgotten experience.

Rotation of the prayer wheel is believed to accrue the same benefit as orally or mentally repeating the *mantra*. Benefits include the amelioration of bad *karma*, the creation of good *karma* and the acquisition of merit (*puṇya*), which together help assure rebirth in a heavenly realm. Each rotation of the wheel is believed to accrue the same benefit as one repetition of the *mantra*, multiplied by the number of times the *mantra* is written on the cylinder or scroll. There is also a tradition that a single turning of the wheel accumulates the same merit as reading all the Buddha’s *sūtras*, and that – metaphorically speaking – ten revolutions erase a mound of *karma* as big as the mythical Mount Meru, and so on. Symbolically, the turning of the wheel is said to represent the turning of the wheel of *dharma* (*dharmachakra*), which refers to the dissemination of Buddhist teachings.

Prayer wheels vary in size from handheld to large and wall-mounted, the latter often mounted in a long row. Some of the larger prayer wheels are wind or water driven, and a few monasteries have even introduced electric prayer wheels. Monks and laity can often be seen turning a row of large metal wall-mounted prayer wheels as they pass by in the belief that as the wheels are turned, the *mantras* are activated, and that the one who sets the wheel in motion acquires the benefits and the merit.

It is believed that even when prayer wheels are spun while one is engaged in other activities, the benefits are still accrued. Tibetan Buddhist pilgrims and monks can often be seen whirling handheld prayer wheels. In many instances, the practice is no doubt mechanical, with the mind wandering elsewhere. Sometimes, to help focus the mind, a rosary (*japamālā*) is held in the right hand to count the number of rotations made by the wheel that is being turned by the left. However, the turning of a prayer wheel has also become a tantric practice in itself, with the mind focused on repeating the *mantra* in a peaceful and meditative state, while the hand spins the wheel in a steady rhythm. Generally, the prayer wheel is spun in a clockwise direction, which is the direction in which the *mantras* are written, but some advanced tantric

practitioners invoke wrathful deities by turning the wheel in an anticlockwise direction. At the end of a session, as in many Tibetan Buddhist practices, it is customary to dedicate the accumulated merit to all sentient beings.

Although the practice seems to date back many centuries, the origin of the prayer wheel remains something of a mystery. A short treatise, written by Gung Thang Pa (1762–1823), probably in the early nineteenth century, at the request of a Mongolian monk from one of the monasteries in the Mongolian capital of Urga (now Ulan Bator), provides perhaps the fullest account of their use from an authentic Tibetan source.

Gung Thang Pa begins his treatise by saying that his intention is “to speak briefly on the origin of prayer wheels, their accompanying contemplative visualizations, the benefits of using them, and so forth”. He goes on to say that there are “very many explanations” in the tantric literature that dates back to before the tenth century. Summarizing these texts, he describes the benefits of spinning the prayer wheel:

It is the highest of protections  
and it cuts off rebirth in the six types.  
It purifies the three transitional states,  
and the spinning is of even greater purity  
than the *mantra* recitation itself;  
The benefits likewise are much greater.

*Gung Thang Pa, A Short Treatise on Prayer Wheels, in OSPW p.16*

Spinning a prayer wheel is deemed to provide protection because that is a primary function of a tantric *mantra*. The “six types” of rebirth, according to Buddhist tradition, are rebirth as a god, a demigod, a human being, an animal, a hungry ghost, or the inhabitant of the various hells. It is believed that this protection is provided by the six syllables of *Auṃ maṇi padme hūṃ*. The “three transitional states (*bardo*)” are the time of death, after death, and rebirth.

Gung Thang Pa continues by speaking of tantric texts which explain that a *mantra* should be ‘turned’ or repeated rapidly in the mind. “The *mantra* of the tutelary (protective deity) spins quickly,” he quotes, and, “It is good to turn a fast wheel,” explaining that this “teaches the need to turn the string of *mantras* in the heart centre (*chakra*)”. These, he maintains, are the inner origin of the outer practice: “Here we find the source for the practice of spinning external wheels which are inscribed (with *mantras*).” After a brief consideration of a text from the Fifth Dalai Lama, which discusses the various ways of winding *dhāraṇī* (*mantra*) rolls around their central axis, with the text starting either from the outer or inner ends of the roll,<sup>1</sup> Gung Thang Pa concludes:

If the contemplative visualization of an inward wheel of *mantras* lies at the origin of outwardly inscribed wheels, then there can be no doubt

that the teachings on turning a string of *mantras* (in visualizations) lie at the origin of the turning of external wheels.

*Gung Thang Pa, A Short Treatise on Prayer Wheels, in OSPW p.17*

He then goes on to describe the practice and the benefits of inwardly visualizing the *sūtra* or *mantra* while simultaneously spinning a prayer wheel:

From whatever *sūtra* or *mantra* may be enclosed (in the prayer wheel), light emanates and one offers worship to all the *buddha* realms. Their blessings coalesce and then melt within. Again, the light rays are emitted. They strike your own body. They purify the consciousness and remove all the obstacles to enlightenment, allowing the blessings of the *buddhas* and sons of *buddhas* to enter.

Then the light rays spread throughout the universe to cleanse the biological and non-vital worlds of any impurity; both the biological and non-vital worlds become pure. One should imagine that all beings together intone the *sūtra* or *mantra*, which transmutes into a background continuity of spiritual Suchness. In such a manner, practising the yogic training of body, speech and mind, the individual letters (of the *sūtra* or *mantra*) each emit their appropriate sounds, and one should imagine that those who are capable of spiritual transformation are placed upon the paths of (spiritual) maturation and liberation. When this is done, one becomes connected to the turning of the wheel of *dharma* (by a *buddha*).

The benefits of spinning the prayer wheel: it brings all the same benefits said to accrue from reading the respective texts. By writing one or more *mantras* on a slate and turning it a few times, one can openly stop contagions, frost, hail, and so forth. So, spinning a special *mantra-dhāraṇī* several times with pure motivation can bring unimaginable benefits. Just being struck by a breeze that has touched such a prayer wheel cleanses a great number of sins and obstacles to enlightenment and is said to implant the seed of liberation.

*Gung Thang Pa, A Short Treatise on Prayer Wheels; cf. in OSPW pp.17–18*

1. Fifth Dalai Lama, *Gzu-gnas blo-ltan ngo-mtshar skyed byed gzungs-'bul-gyi lag-len 'khrul spong nyin-mor byed-pa*, in *RRC1* pp.389–437.

**masjid** (A/P), **masīt** (Pu) *Lit.* place of prostration, place of worship; a sacred place; a mosque; a Muslim place of worship, usually with one or more minarets, often decorated with detailed designs and extracts from the *Qur'ān*.

The Arabic *masjid* (from which the English 'mosque' originates) predates Islam. It is related to the Aramaic *masgid*, a word appearing as early as the

fifth century BCE, and also found in Nabataean inscriptions, where – like *masjid* – it means ‘place of worship’. The Nabataeans were Arab traders who flourished in the southeast of Palestine, around Petra, during the Hellenistic and Roman periods. The term ‘*masjid*’ was used for pre-Muslim sanctuaries or places of worship that had been consecrated to God and where God was invoked. Even before the Prophet’s time, the sacred area around the *Ka’bah* was known as *al-masjid al-ḥarām* (sacred place of worship), also known as *bayt Allāh* (house of God). In the *Qur’ān*, Abraham is said to have been a Muslim,<sup>1</sup> and in a *ḥadīth*, the temple of King David is described as a *masjid*.<sup>2</sup> There is another *ḥadīth* in which an Abyssinian church<sup>3</sup> is called a *masjid* and one in which *masjid* refers to a Jewish and a Christian tomb.<sup>4</sup> That Muḥammad used a word not of specifically Muslim origin for the sacred buildings of his new religion reflects his attitude of tolerance towards earlier religions.

The sanctity of *al-masjid al-ḥarām* with which Muḥammad would have been familiar since childhood, was always regarded by him as indisputable. He and his followers regularly made the circumambulation (*ṭawāf*) of the *Ka’bah* and kissed the Black Stone, and the Prophet would frequently go there to perform the *ṣalāh* (P. *namāz*, prayers). Where his new teaching did not directly exclude them, the Prophet retained the ancient customs associated with the site and used to take part in the traditional rites before his *hijrah* (flight) to Madīnah.

Two *masjid* that existed before Islam are mentioned in *sūrah* 17 of the *Qur’ān* in connection with Muḥammad’s Night Journey (*al-Mīrāj*, *al-Isrā’*):

Glorified be He who carried His servant by night (*isrā’*)  
from the sacred place of worship (*al-masjid al-ḥarām*)  
to the far distant place of worship (*al-masjid al-aqṣá*),  
the neighbourhood whereof we have blessed,  
that we might show Him of our tokens!

*Qur’ān* 17:1; cf. MGK

These two *masjid* are *al-ḥarām* (the sacred) in Mecca and *al-aqṣá* (the far distant) in Jerusalem, although actual mosques at these places that were given these names were constructed later. In fact, it was a charge made against the *Quraysh* (the tribe into which the Prophet was born) during the early Meccan period that they drove the Prophet’s followers out of *al-masjid al-ḥarām*.<sup>5</sup> It was deemed an absurdity, however, for the godless (those antagonistic to the Prophet) to prevent the worship of God in “God’s own mosques”, and – according to the *Qur’ān* – it was revealed some nine years after the *hijrah* (around two years after the Muslims had returned to Mecca) that “It is not right for polytheists to frequent the mosques of God.”<sup>6</sup> Muḥammad then made the place a mosque for his new religion, and his opponents were excluded from their traditional place of worship.<sup>7</sup>

To Muḥammad, the Meccan *masjid* always remained the principal mosque. The sanctuary included the *Ka'bah*, the *Zamzam* (well), and the *Maqām Ibrāhīm* (Station of Abraham), all three situated in a small open space. With the growth of the nascent religion, the sanctuary soon became too small and under the Caliphs 'Umar and 'Uthmān, nearby houses were demolished and the area was enclosed by a wall. Successive enlargements were also made. Ibn al-Zubayr roofed over the area surrounded by the wall. Colonnades and minarets were erected, together with small wooden buildings or shelters for the *imām* during prayers. The mosque was given final form in 1572–1577 during the reign of Sulṭān Selīm II.<sup>8</sup> The mosque that became known as *al-Masjid al-Aqṣā* (the Farther Mosque) was built in Jerusalem during the *Umayyad* period, towards the end of the seventh century.

According to the Prophet's teaching, a sanctuary was not a fundamental necessity for worship. Every place was the same to God, and humility in the presence of God could be shown anywhere. Hence his saying:

The (whole) earth has been made sacred and pure and *masjid* for me, so whenever the time of prayer (*ṣalāh*) comes for any one of you, he should pray wherever he is.

*Ḥadīth Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim 4:1058, HSM*

Nevertheless, wherever Islam has spread, mosques have been built as places where people can come together in worship. Muslim mosques vary considerably in style, but the basic elements are the same. A consecrated space is required, open or enclosed, in which the faithful, arranged in rows behind the *imām* (prayer leader), perform the standing, bowing, and kneeling of orthodox Muslim prayer (*ṣalāh*). All must enter the place in a state of ritual purity. All face the direction of Mecca (the *qiblah*), indicated by a closed arch (*mihrāb*), decorated and adorned to varying degrees. Larger mosques have a pulpit (*minbar*) to the right of the arch from which the Friday sermon (*khuṭbah*) is delivered.

The prototype of the first mosque is that of *Qubā'* in Madīnah, which the prophet built there upon his arrival from Mecca. But the most sacred mosque in Islam remains the *Masjid al-Ḥarām* (Sacred Mosque) in Mecca, in the centre of which is the *Ka'bah*, a large cubic stone structure, covered with a black cloth. In a corner of the *Ka'bah* is kept the Black Stone. Neither the Black Stone, nor the *Ka'bah* itself are worshipped; but they have been considered sacred for as long as the Arabs can remember, and it is towards the *Ka'bah* that the faithful turn in prayer.

In keeping with their inner, spiritual outlook on life, the Sufis have commonly said that the real mosque, where God dwells and where He can be found, is the human heart (*dil, qalb*):



The true mosque is built in a pure and holy heart:  
 there, let all men worship God;  
 For there He dwells, not in a mosque of stone.

*Unattributed; cf. in MOI p.87*

Similarly, mystics say that it is within the human body, the “natural mosque” designed by God for His worship, where He must be sought. Thus, the North Indian saint, Tulsī Sāhib, writes:

What a pity that dwellers in the natural mosque (*masjid*)  
 visit fake temples (*naqlī mandir*) and mosques (*masjid*),  
 only to suffer in misery.  
 Listen intently in the arch of the natural *Ka’bah*:  
 a Voice from eternity is beckoning you.

*Tulsī Sāhib, Sant Bānī, SBHB p.44*

Rūmī observes that people are prepared to “destroy” this “house” or “mosque” that God has built, while at the same time worshipping the bricks and mortar of a “transient” mosque. And he adds that saints, who are fully conscious of God within, are the real mosques or places of worship for all, for they can lead a soul to find God for themselves. “People of the heart (*ahl-i dil*)” is a Sufi term for mystics:

All that you think of is liable to pass away:  
 he that comes not into your thought is God.  
 Why do men behave with presumption at the door of this house,  
 if they know Who is within the house?  
 Fools venerate the mosque (*masjid*),  
 and try to destroy the people of the heart (*ahl-i dil*).  
 That mosque is transient:  
 it is the heart that is real, O asses!  
 The (true) mosque (*masjid*) is nothing  
 but the hearts of the spiritual captains (*darūn-i sarwarān*).  
 The mosque (*masjid*) that is the inner being of the saints  
 is the place of worship for all: God is there.

*Rūmī, Maṣnavī II:3107–11; cf. MJR2 p.383*

‘Irāqī also says that the real place of worship is within, in what the Sufis call the “tavern of ruin (*kharābah*)”. Along with other “lovers” of God, the devotee drinks a “cup” of divine wine from the hands of the master, the “dissolute haunTERS” of the inner “tavern” of divine intoxication. These are all metaphors for inner experience. Such lovers care neither for ascetic practices nor for miraculous powers:



We have moved our belongings from the mosque (*masjid*)  
to the tavern of ruin (*kharābah*);  
We have erased the page of asceticism and miracles.  
Now we sit in the ranks of lovers in the magian's lane,  
and drink a cup from the hands of dissolute haunters of the tavern.

*ʿIrāqī, Divine Flashes, Introduction, KHI p.49; cf. DF p.34, in SSE3 p.161*

Addressing the belief that God is to be found in Muslim holy places, Bulleh Shāh says bluntly that this belief has no foundation:

God is not found in the mosque (*masīt*), nor in the *Kaʿbah*:  
neither is He in the *Qurʾān*, nor found in prayers.

*Bulleh Shāh, Kullīyāt, KBS p.366, SBSU p.463; cf. BSPS p.468*

Ḥāfiẓ, on the other hand, writes that every soul is in search of God, and His love is to be found everywhere:

Everyone, sane or insane,  
is a seeker of the Beloved:  
Every place, mosque (*masjid*) or the church,  
is the house of love.

*Ḥāfiẓ, Dīvān, DHA p.38, DIH p.92; cf. DHWC (59:4) p.146*

See also: **al-masjid al-aqṣá**.

1. *Qurʾān* 2:124–40, 3:67, 84–85, 4:125, 42:13, *passim*.
2. *Ḥadīth al-Ṭabarī, Taʾrīkh* 1:2408.7ff.
3. *Ḥadīth Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* 1:8.419, 426, 2:23.425, 5:58.213, *HSB*; *Ḥadīth Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* 4:1078, *HSM*.
4. *Ḥadīth Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* 1:8.427, *HSB*; *Ḥadīth Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* 4:1079, *HSM*.
5. *Qurʾān* 2:217, 5:2, 8:34, 22:25, 48:27.
6. *Qurʾān* 9:17ff.
7. *Qurʾān* 9:28.
8. See “al-masjd al-ḥarām,” *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, *EI6*.

**masjid al-aqṣá, al-** (A), **masjid-i aqṣā** (P) *Lit.* the far distant (*al-aqṣá*) place of worship (*masjid*); the farthest sanctuary; the Farther Mosque; according to Islamic lore, originally the Temple of Solomon or the Temple of Jerusalem, said to have been started by King David and completed by his son Solomon; the second most holy place in Islam after the Sacred Mosque (*al-Masjid al-Ḥarām*) in Mecca; the original Muslim *qiblah* (direction to face in prayer), before the *qiblah* became the direction of the Sacred Mosque and the *Kaʿbah* at Mecca.

Both places are mentioned in *sūrah* 17 of the *Qurʾān* in connection with Muḥammad’s Night Journey (*al-Miʿrāj*, *al-Isrāʾ*),<sup>1</sup> though the actual mosques were built later. The mosque that became known as *al-Masjid al-Aqṣá* was built in Jerusalem during the *Umayyad* period, towards the end of the seventh century. In this verse, the Prophet is referring to the sanctuaries that existed before his time, of which the one at Mecca was even then called *al-Ḥarām*, and the one at Jerusalem was sometimes referred to as *al-Aqṣá*.

Sufis have commonly said that the real mosque (*masjid*) where God dwells is the human heart. In a few instances, the *Masjid al-Aqṣá* has also been used in a metaphorical context. As Anṣārī writes:

O God, the *qiblah* of those who know is the sun of Your face.  
The *miḥrāb* of all souls is the arch of Your brow.  
The *Masjid al-Aqṣá* of all hearts is the sanctuary of Your lane.  
Glance in our direction, for our gazes are upon You.

*Anṣārī, Song of the Dervish, BWIC p.215*

The *miḥrāb* is the niche in a mosque that points in the direction of Mecca. In his *Mašnavī*, Rūmī also relates an extensive and rambling story, with many digressions and asides, concerning the building of the original *Masjid al-Aqṣá* by Solomon. In the narrative, the “Father Mosque” represents the spiritual heart, the higher spiritual life in search of which people often give themselves wholeheartedly, but with varying mental attitudes:

When he laid the foundation of that mosque (*masjid*),  
*jinn* and men came and threw themselves into the work,  
one party from love, and another company unwillingly,  
just as God’s servants do in the way they obey Him.

*Rūmī, Mašnavī IV:1114–15; cf. MJR4 p.333*

And Rūmī exhorts the seekers to build their inner “mosque”:

O noble ones, build the Father Mosque (*Masjid-i Aqṣā*),  
for Solomon has returned – and peace be with you!

*Rūmī, Mašnavī IV:1146, MJR4 p.335*

According to Rūmī’s retelling of the story, once the mosque is built, Solomon goes there every morning without fail to see what new herbs and plants are growing. From these, many new healing medicines, as well as poisons are discovered. Metaphorically, the seeker attends to his daily meditation. This enables him to keep careful daily watch upon what is growing in the ground of his inner being. What he observes – his thoughts, feelings and experiences – reflect the state of his inner spiritual treasure, his “Farther Mosque”. Rūmī advises

seeking the highest aspirations of the spiritual heart – the *Sīmurgh* (*Anqā*, a fabulous bird symbolizing God), the legendary mountain “*Qāf*” and the “Farther Mosque” all symbolizing the heights of the heart’s spiritual potential:

The spirit that flies after crows –  
 the crow carries it towards the graveyard (the body).  
 Beware! Do not run in pursuit of the crow-like lower mind (*nafs*),  
 for it will carry you to the graveyard, not the orchard.  
 If you go, go in pursuit of the *Anqā* of the heart,  
 towards the *Qāf* and Farther Mosque (*Aqṣā*) of the heart.  
 Every moment from your meditation (*sawdā*)  
 a new plant is growing in your Farther Mosque (*Masjid-i Aqṣā*).  
 Like Solomon, give it its due: investigate it,  
 do not lay upon it the foot of rejection,  
 because the various sorts of plants will inform you  
 of the state of your inner ground –  
 whether in the ground there is sugar cane or only reeds –  
 for every ground is known by its plants.  
 Therefore, the heart’s ground,  
 whereof meditation (*fikr*) has always been the plant –  
 That meditation (*fikr*) reveals the secrets of the heart.

*Rūmī, Maṣnavī IV: 1311–18; cf. MJR4 pp.344–45*

One morning, Solomon goes to the mosque as usual to check on any new plants:

Then Solomon saw that a new plant had grown,  
 like an ear of corn, in a corner.  
 He saw a very uncommon plant, green and fresh:  
 its greenness dazzled the sight.  
 The herb at once saluted him:  
 he returned its greeting, and marvelled at its beauty.  
 He said, “What is your name? Tell me straight!”  
 It said, “It is ‘carob’, O king of the world.”  
 He said, “What special property do you possess?”  
 It replied, “Wherever I grow, that place becomes desolate.  
 I, who am carob (*kharrūb*), am the ruin (*kharāb*) of the abode:  
 I am the destroyer of the building of water and clay.”

*Rūmī, Maṣnavī IV: 1373–78; cf. MJR4 p.348*

The new “carob” plant, in the story, represents the first stirrings of negative thought in the ground of the heart. The carob or locust tree is an evergreen that can grow to fifteen metres, and despite its usefulness has a generally cursed

reputation in Arab folklore, perhaps because of its ability to thrive in barren wasteland. Sleeping beneath a carob tree, for example, is not recommended. In the symbolism of his story, Rūmī identifies the “carob” as spiritual pride and hypocrisy and recommends pulling it out “by the root” before it destroys all spiritual aspirations. Accept your failings humbly, he advises, for this is the way to overcome them:

The mosque (*masjid*) is the heart to which the body bows down:  
 wherever the mosque (*masjid*) is, the bad companion is the carob.  
 When love for a bad companion has grown in you, beware,  
 flee from him and do not converse with him.  
 Tear it up by the root, for if it shoot up its head,  
 it will demolish both you and your mosque.

O lover, your carob is hypocrisy:  
 why do you creep, like children, towards untruth?  
 Know yourself to be a sinner and call yourself a sinner –  
 do not be afraid – so that the master (*Ustād*)  
 may not withdraw from teaching you.  
 When you say, “I am ignorant: give me instruction,”  
 such fair dealing is better than a false reputation.

Learn from your father (Adam), O clear-thinking man:  
 he said, heretofore, “O our Lord,” and “We have done wrong.”<sup>2</sup>  
 He made no excuse,<sup>3</sup> nor did he invent falsehood  
 nor lift up the banner of deceit and evasion.

*Rūmī, Maṣnavī IV:1383–90; cf. MJR4 pp.348–49*

In a characteristic manner, Rūmī also gives, as an aside, a second meaning to the “Farther Mosque”, and to the potentially destructive “carob” plant that grows there. It is the ‘edifice’ of spirituality built in this world by a master. As long as a master is alive and present, he can prevent the decline of his teachings into a religion. Only after his death will it “become riven with cracks”. In Rūmī’s story, when Solomon sees the “carob” growing in his mosque:

At that moment Solomon immediately understood  
 that his appointed time had arrived,  
 and that the hour of his departure would soon come.  
 He said, “So long as I exist, assuredly this mosque  
 will not be damaged by the banes of this earth.  
 While I am here and my existence continues,  
 how should the Farther Mosque (*Masjid al-Aqṣā*)  
 become riven with cracks?”

Know, then, that without doubt the ruin of our mosque (*masjid*)  
will not occur until after our death.

*Rūmī, Maṣnavī IV:1379–82; cf. MJR4 p.348*

See also: **masjid**, **mi'rāj**.

1. *Qur'ān* 17:1.
2. Cf. *Genesis* 3:10–12.
3. In fact, Adam blamed Eve! See *Genesis* 3:12.

**masjid al-ḥarām**, **al-** (A), **masjid-i ḥarām** (P) *Lit.* the sacred (*ḥarām*) place of worship (*masjid*); the sacred sanctuary; the Sacred Mosque; a site in Mecca regarded as a sacred place long before the time of Muḥammad, later becoming the site of the Sacred Mosque. See **masjid**, **al-masjid al-aqṣá**.

**māthā teknā** (H/Pu) *Lit.* to bow (*teknā*) the forehead (*māthā*); obeisance; to place the head on the ground in obeisance to someone; a Hindu custom of respect to elders by bending and placing the head on the ground before them. In modern times, it has become only bowing or touching the feet, or even just a semblance of touching the feet. *Māthā teknā* is also practised by Sikhs before the *Guru Granth Sāhib* or *Ādi Granth*. Bowing before the holy book is understood to be a sign of submission to the teachings of the *gurus* contained within the book, rather than to the book itself.

In spiritual life, a *guru* may occasionally permit a disciple to make such physical obeisance before him. True spiritual obeisance, however, is of the mind and soul before the inner spiritual form of the *guru*. Guru Arjun writes in such a manner that his verse can be understood in either way:

With my eyes, I gaze upon the blessed vision of the *guru's darshan*:  
I touch my forehead (*māthā*) to the *guru's (gur)* feet.

*Guru Arjun, Ādi Granth 1101, AGK*

**maun(a)**, **maun(a)-sādhana(a)** (S/H), **mona** (Pa) *Lit.* silence (*mauna*); the discipline (*sādhana*) of silence; a vow of silence; the practice of observing silence; generally undertaken as a part of spiritual discipline; hence the terms, *mauna-sādhana* (practice of silence), *mauna-vrata* (vow of silence), and *kāshṭa-mauna* (extreme or total silence). One who observes silence is a *muni*, although the term is used more generally for a sage.

In the Jain tradition, *mauna-vrata* may be taken for a certain period or for one's entire life. More generally, *Mauna Agyaras*, also called *Mauna*

*Ekādashī*, the eleventh day (*ekādashī*) of *Mārgashira* (November/December), is an annual day of complete silence and fasting, when worship, meditation and silent recitation (*japa*) are directed towards those *Tīrthankaras* whose *kalyāṇakas* (significant life events such as their birth and attainment of *nirvāṇa*) fall on that day. The Jain scholar Dr Soneji writes that much physical and mental energy is expended by speaking – energy that can be otherwise used for spiritual development:

Silence is resorted to as a way of enhancing meditation on the doctrines that have been heard from great preceptors or received from the study of scriptures. *Sādhakas* (aspirants) of all stages can cultivate it according to their own capability. *Sādhakas* in the elementary and intermediate stages should control their speech as much as possible, so that physical and mental energy can be conserved. This conserved energy can then be advantageously applied to self-study and self-analysis. Success in *sādhana* can thereby be accomplished more speedily by using the energy thus conserved for spiritual progress – energy that might otherwise have been wasted in the pursuit of mundane happiness.

*Dr Soneji, Aspirant's Guide; cf. AGSS*

The Buddha, who taught the Middle Way of not going to extremes, observes that *mona* of itself does not make a person wise:

Not by observing silence (*mona*) does a man  
who is foolish and ignorant become a sage (*muni*).

*Dhammapada 19:13*

Regardless of religious or spiritual tradition, talking readily scatters the mind and draws it into thinking of external affairs, making recollection and inner concentration difficult; hence the development of *mauna-sādhana* as an ascetic practice. Speaking from the perspective of the Hindu and yogic tradition, a tendency towards silence is one of several practices recommended in the *Subāla Upanishad*:

One should cultivate the characteristics of a child. The characteristics of a child are non-attachment and innocence. By silence (*mauna*), by learning, by non-observance of conventions relating to the classes and stages of life one acquires the state of aloneness proclaimed by the *Vedas*.

*Subāla Upanishad 13:1; cf. PU p.888*

Outer silence does not mean that the mind within is silent. This is intimated in the *Yoga Bhāshya*, which differentiates between utter silence (*kāshṭa-mauna*,

rigorous silence) – implying complete stillness of mind and body even without the use of hand gestures to express feelings or needs – and formal silence (*ākāra-mauna*), something achieved simply by not speaking.<sup>1</sup> The *Laghu-Yoga-Vāsishṭha* calls control of speech alone *vāk-mauna* (speech silence), noting that “the true silence (*mauna*) is that exalted state in which the mind of a *muni* rests.”<sup>2</sup> Understood as internal stillness, *mauna* is the fruit of desirelessness:

To the one who has realized his own nature, and drinks the undiluted bliss of the Self (*Ātman*), there is nothing more exhilarating than the quietude (*mauna*) that accompanies the state of desirelessness.

*Shankara, Vivekachūḍāmaṇi 527; cf. VCSM p.196*

*Mauna* is a great help in developing inner stillness:

*Mauna* or silence is advised as leading the soul forward to contemplation. By the discipline of silence, we curb the excesses which flow from the tongue: heresy, backbiting, flattery. We cannot listen to the voice of God when our minds are dissipated, given to restless activity and are filled externally and internally with noise. Progress in silence is progress to the realization of spirit. When silence descends on the soul, its activities are joined to the silent creative power of God. . . .

*Mauna* is abstinence from speech. It is regarded as helpful for meditation. We must turn away from the world of noise into the inward stillness, the interior silence, to become aware of the Reality which transcends time and space.

*S. Radhakrishnan, Principal Upanishads, PU pp.110, 222*

The practice of complete outer silence may be helpful to some extent, but more than that is required to quieten the mind within:

That which is Reality (*Sat*) cannot be obtained by recitation (*jap*), austerities (*tap*), and a vow of silence (*maun sādhan*). All those following such practices stop short (of the goal), and no one (in this way) has been able to find the secret of the Reality which saints have realized. That secret can be known only by serving the *satguru* of the time and taking refuge in him – for that Reality has incarnated Himself as *satguru*. Therefore, all those who wish to attain the realm of Reality (*sat pad*) should strive to please the *satguru* of the time. Thus will they one day reach that realm of Reality.

*Swami Shiv Dayal Singh, Sār Bachan 173; cf. SBAT pp.97–98*

See also: **hēsychia** (8.1), **muni** (7.1).

1. *Yoga Bhāṣya* 2:32.
2. *Laghu-Yoga-Vāsishṭha* 6:7, TYVL p.264.

**māwe** (Mo) *Lit.* likeness, semblance; something, often a material object, used to represent someone, something, or some place; a representation used in Māori sympathetic magic.

The New Zealand ethnographer Elsdon Best (1856–1931) explains:

This term seems to have the same meaning as *āhua* – *i.e.* semblance. It is, at least sometimes, a material object, or is represented by such. . . . When a person took to an expert (*tohunga*) the *māwe* of some property he had had stolen, the latter would see the *wairua* (spirit) of the thief preceding the bearer as he approached. The *māwe* of a successful fight was often taken in the form of a lock of hair from a slain enemy. As the force returned home, the person carrying this object marched in front of the party, and, on arrival at the home village, it was deposited at the *tūāhu* (altar), where the ceremonial function took place. . . .

When a raiding party was about to attack a fortified village, a wily scout was, in some cases, first dispatched in order to procure the *māwe* of the place. This was usually taken in the form of a small splinter from one of the stockade timbers, or a shred of bark from the *aka* used as lashing material for the palisades. Over such a medium, certain ceremonies were performed in order to render the enemy nervous, apprehensive, unstrung, to affect their minds and courage, to induce in them the condition of *mauri oho* (anxiety, fearfulness), and to ensure a successful attack. Here we again encounter sympathetic magic acting through a medium. Should the official priestly expert (*tohunga*) of the raiding force chance to be the medium of an *atua toro* (a spirit god employed as a reconnoitring agent), such as *Tamarau*, then he would dispatch that being to procure the *māwe*, which would probably be brought to him in the form of a hair from the head of an inmate of the enemy village.

When Ira-tu-moana slew the great monster Tarakura at Te Awa-a-te-atua, he conveyed the *māwe* of that victory to his sacred place (*tūāhu*), near Te Umuhika. When Māui of immortal fame drew up this island from the depths of Hine-moana, he took the *māwe* thereof back to Hawaiki (Hawaii). In these cases the term *āhua* might have been employed with equal correctness, so far as my knowledge extends.

*Elsdon Best, Spiritual and Mental Concepts of the Maori, SMMB pp.21–22*

See also: **āhua**, **ariā**.



**mbaraká** (G) A ritual rattle made from a gourd, used extensively by Guaraní shamans of South America.

Anyone can use a *mbaraká*, but the shaman's *mbaraká* is unusually powerful. In Guaraní creation myths, the *mbaraká* is used by the creator *Ñanderú Guazú* and by His son *Kurahy*, the prototypical Guaraní shaman. *Kurahy* makes a *mbaraká* and dances himself into ecstasy until his Father takes him away to be with Himself. The *mbaraká* is thus a tool for and symbol of ecstatic union with the creator.

"I consider the *mbaraká* the symbol of the Guaraní race," says Curt Nimuendajú, a widely published writer on the Guaraní.<sup>1</sup> Use of the *mbaraká* was recorded 400 years ago in references to the Tupinambá, another name for the ancient Guaraní. These early writings describe a rattle made of a gourd pierced by an arrow. The Guaraní of that time believed that a spirit living within the gourd communicated through the *mbaraká* rattle. The *Lagenaria siceraria* bottle gourd, which has been cultivated in both the Old and New Worlds for probably five to ten thousand years, has been found in Peruvian gravesites and served as a model for ancient pottery.

Present-day Avá-Chiripá also use a gourd rattle, or *mbaraká*, which they believe contains a spirit and can invoke other spirits by its sound. Instead of an arrow, they impale the *mbaraká* with a wooden rod decorated with feathers, and they place the small black fruit of the *ibahú* shrub inside the gourd to make it rattle. According to Guaraní myths, the archetype of the *ibahú* exists in paradise (*oka-vusú*).<sup>2</sup>

Alfred Métraux, who has written extensively on indigenous South American religion, sees the gourd rattle as "the most sacred object" among the tropical tribes of South America because it "provokes and controls ecstasy for shamans across the face of the continent".<sup>3</sup>

South American religions, like most major world religions, use a rich assortment of sound instruments in addition to the *mbaraká* rattle. Lawrence Sullivan speaks of flutes, drums, bells, voices, pottery, and trumpets that are used by various South American tribes. Mataco healers summon spirits with songs. The Toba use bell-rattles and other noises to heal sickness:

The wholeness achieved through the symbolism of sound is not only a symbol of an undifferentiated state of meaning; it is the ultimate Reality on which the temporal world is founded. Noise recreates a mythic reality that is wholly concrete and sensual, even if the experience of it be mystical.

*L.E. Sullivan, Icanchu's Drum, ID p.223*

Physical sounds used in religious rituals often derive from inner spiritual sounds. When formal religion succeeds mystical practice, external bells,

chimes, and other instruments replace inwardly experienced sounds. Especially since it is an instrument of union with the creator, it may be speculated that the *mbaraká* symbolizes an inner, spiritual sound.

Although Sullivan is referring to a mythic primordial world, his thought lends itself also to the notion that the sounds of religious services and rituals are far more than sound waves striking ear drums. Sound is indeed the “ultimate Reality”, but that reality is mystical, coming from the one true divine source and experienced by mortal beings on an inner plane of existence.

Whether or not the *mbaraká* had its source in inner mystical sound, its present power – the spirit it contains and evokes – is linked to the shaman who uses it. Ordinary people may have the same instrument of sound, but the shaman’s rattle is different. It is the shaman’s ecstatic experience of divinity when using the *mbaraká* that gives power to this ritual instrument.

1. Curt Nimuendajú, *Mitos de creación*, MCDM p.99.
2. Miguel Bartolomé, “Shamanism Among the Avá-Chiripá,” SAC p.123.
3. Alfred Métraux, *Religion and Shamanism*, AEB143 p.573.

### **Mecca See Makkah al-Mukarramah.**

**medicine bundle** A cloth or skin bag, varying considerably in size, which holds a collection of items regarded as highly sacred by the individual or community to whom the bundle belongs; also called a sacred bundle. In this context, ‘medicine’ does not imply a curative remedy, but refers to the natural spiritual energy or power inherent in all creation, in human and spirit beings as well as inanimate things. Medicine bundles figure in many Native American myths and stories.

Items in the bundle can include feathers, animal or bird parts, herbs, tobacco, pebbles, semiprecious stones, pipes, face masks for ritual dances, rattles for protection, whistles, mementos, and so on. Medicine bundles of the past would even contain war clubs and scalps. Opening a medicine bundle is generally a sacred affair, something that is not lightly undertaken:

Bundles are commonly maintained and protected by select keepers. Some types of bundles are buried with their owners. The opening of a bundle is invariably a ritual occasion, and songs are sung as each item is handled and used. Specific bundles may be associated with different ritual and story events. For example, the Sarcee tribes associate their medicine bundle with the sun dance and growing of tobacco. In a Sarcee story, a hunter kills a large buffalo near a lake. While he is skinning the buffalo, a whale comes up from the lake and begs him for

protection against thunderbirds circling in the sky above. The hunter saves the whale by giving the buffalo meat to the thunderbirds. The whale thanks him by showing him how to make a medicine bag from the buffalo's stomach, then fill it with the skin of every living creature and decorate it. The whale tells the hunter to keep tobacco and berries inside the bundle as food for the whale, and to make an offering to the lake whenever he is nearby. The whale also teaches the hunter the beaver songs associated with the bundle. He says the medicine bundle should never be given to another tribe, and that it should be passed down through a lineage of trusted members of the Sarcee tribe.<sup>1</sup>

*"Medicine Bundles," Dictionary of Native American Mythology, DNAM*

The contemporary American anthropologist Sam Gill adds:

Bundles of various types have great powers that can be used in many ways for the benefit of the people. Bundles may have the power to cure, to be clairvoyant, to call game animals, to assure success in a hunt or war, even to attract a lover. Bundles are commonly considered to be alive and the place of residence of living spirits. They are kept by the most responsible persons and families and cared for constantly. Opening a bundle is ordinarily a complex ritual affair, highly constrained by ritual proscription.

Students of sacred bundles have found that the symbolism of bundle items is often not at all standardized. Bundles used for essentially the same purpose, even within the same tribe, may contain quite different items. Similar items in separate bundles may also be associated with quite different meanings. This variety, not really so confusing, is itself a strong affirmation that these esoteric objects are highly symbolic. It is through the stories of their origin, the histories of their owners and use, the occasions and manner of their use that these objects come to bear significance of a magnitude that infinitely surpasses their commonplace material character. It is in the power they generate, in the significance they evoke, in the awe and respect they command that the symbolic powers of these sacred medicine bundles must be understood and appreciated.

*Sam Gill, Native American Religions, NARG p.68*

Medicine bundles may belong to an individual or to a particular village or community. They may be regarded as the focus of a tribe's strength and power to heal. Special dances are observed to renew the energy of the medicine bundle, such as the annual green corn dance of the Seminole, Creek, and Southern Iroquoian tribes.<sup>2</sup> Some medicine bundles are worn around the neck of a shaman when he is performing healing rituals.<sup>3</sup>

Among the Pawnee, there are two kinds of medicine bundle: a *cuharipi* ('rains wrapped up'), which belongs to the village; and a *karu su* ('sack'), which is a war bundle, belonging to individual warriors. Such bundles are opened before a war party sets out.<sup>4</sup>

Among the Zuni, the most powerful and precious medicine bundles (*ettowe*) are possessed by the rain shamans; they are kept securely and 'fed' regularly, according to a prescribed traditional ritual.<sup>5</sup>

See also: **medicine (Native North American)** (7.3).

1. See C. Frisbie, *Navajo Medicine Bundles or Jish*, NMBF.
2. See "green corn dance," *Dictionary of Native American Mythology*, DNAM.
3. See "sati," *Dictionary of Native American Mythology*, DNAM.
4. See "bundle societies," *Dictionary of Native American Mythology*, DNAM.
5. See "ettowe," *Dictionary of Native American Mythology*, DNAM.

**medicine wheel** Physically, an arrangement of stones, aligned to the four cardinal directions, having the shape of a wheel with one central stone and spokes radiating outwards to the rim; used for prayer, dancing, singing and religious ceremonies, activities that are not mutually exclusive; sometimes called a 'medicine hoop'; can be of any size, and the large and permanent ones, which can be found at various places throughout North America, are regarded by Native Americans as sacred sites. As an image or metaphor, the medicine wheel encompasses the cycles of life. The construction of a small, temporary medicine wheel is often a part of a vision quest, which is (generally) a four-day retreat in search of spiritual vision and insight, often undertaken by a young man in search of direction in life.

In this context, 'medicine' does not imply a curative remedy, but refers to the natural spiritual energy or power inherent in all creation, in human and spirit beings as well as inanimate things. The image of a wheel with its unending circumference depicts a number of related concepts, such as infinity, the cycles of nature, the four cardinal directions, and man's integral relationship with all other things and beings.

The medicine wheel as an image or metaphor is also identified with the 'sacred hoop', which is an expression for the circle of life within which things exist. For a community, it may be a symbol of their encampment, with its central camp fire. On a wider scale, the sacred hoop is the sun, the sky, the four cardinal directions and the spirit tree, with their many seasons and cycles.

There are various interpretations of the wheel among the many Native American people. The author Steven McFadden provides a general overview:

On the Native American medicine wheel, each of the four cardinal directions has a meaning. The east is generally represented by the eagle, symbolizing the qualities of vision and illumination. The south is often symbolized by the mouse, representing trust, innocence, and growth. The totem of the west is usually the bear, who teaches human beings to have the courage to go within and face what is in the cave of the heart. The north is frequently symbolized by the snowy owl and the white buffalo, both of which serve as a reminder of the purity of snow and the qualities of clarity and wisdom. When a native person seeks wisdom, he or she will often look to the North, the direction of dreams and crystals.

*Steven McFadden, Profiles in Wisdom, PWES p.35*

Thomas Mails (1920–2001), an American artist and writer who developed a long-term association with Native American traditions, describes its use among the Cheyenne Indians of the great plains:

The Cheyenne Indians also used the sacred circle and the cardinal directions as an educational tool, and refer to it as the medicine wheel. In their lore, the southwest is the place of innocence and growth. Its colour is red, and its totems are weather and the little mouse spirit. The northwest is the place of introspection, perfection, beauty, and harvest. Its colour is yellow, and its totem is the bear spirit. The northeast is the location of wisdom, death, and disease. Its colour is black, which is associated with purification, and its totem is the buffalo spirit. The southeast is the source of illumination, life, and renewal. Its colour is white, and its totem is the golden eagle, who – because it flies so high and is so powerful and sharp-eyed – is considered a principal intermediary between the ‘above beings (deities and spirits)’ and humans.

In using the medicine wheel for teaching and meditative purposes, the Cheyenne seek to discover themselves, to perceive things and themselves, to find relationships with the world around them, and to ‘turn the wheel’. They explain the latter by saying that all of life takes place in a continuous circle, whose centre and source of power are the ‘above beings’. Life flows from them into the hoop and keeps it turning. The life lived by any person is represented by marking a small place on the hoop. Using this as a focal point, the person’s life is thought of as being the result of what has been inserted into the hoop by prior generations, including grandparents and parents, all of whom have transmitted themselves into that person either literally or figuratively. While the person lives, he or she benefits from the ancestors’ contributions, builds upon them, reshapes them, and,

hopefully, adds to them in a positive way. When people leave this world for the next, their own contributions, including their children, are left behind as additions to the hoop that will continue to do its part in nourishing future generations. Thus the hoop turns and continues, unbroken and unending.

*Thomas Mails, Secret Native American Pathways, SNPM p.199*

See also: **medicine (Native North American)** (7.3), **prayer** (8.5).

**mele** (Hw) *Lit.* a chant, song, anthem. See **hula**.

**micchāmi dukkaḍaṃ** (Pk) A formalized request for forgiveness; an abbreviation of *tassa micchāmi dukkaḍaṃ*, which comes from the Sanskrit “*Tasya mithyā me dushkṛitāṃ*,” which means “May that which is wrongly done (*dushkṛitāṃ*) by me (*me*) be in vain (*mithyā*)” or “May all my misdeeds be undone;” hence, may all the wrong I have done bear no fruit; may all my wrongdoings come to nothing.

The saying is most closely associated with the last day of the eight-day (*Shvetāmbara*) or ten-day (*Digambara*) festival of *Paryushaṇa*, when members of the Jain community greet their friends and relatives with “*Micchāmi dukkaḍaṃ*”. The saying implies, “Should I have caused you any offence, knowingly or unknowingly, in thought, word or deed, then I ask your forgiveness.” The day is also known as *Kshamāvanī* (‘Forgiveness Day’) and *Samvatsarī Pratikramaṇa* (‘Annual Confession of Wrongdoing’), often shortened to just *Samvatsarī*, and the rite is known as *kshamāpāṇa* (asking forgiveness). The expression is also used in normal daily life, as appropriate. As a social custom, and when meant sincerely, it is an excellent way of trying to clear the emotional burden of things said or done that have, inadvertently or otherwise, caused hurt to others. In the modern world, letters are sent and telephone calls made to friends and relatives, seeking their forgiveness for any hurts incurred.

The saying is added at the end of a Jain Prakrit prayer that is founded upon the fundamental Jain principle of *ahiṃsā*, of causing no hurt or harm to any living being, by thought, word, or deed:

I forgive all living beings:  
 may all living beings forgive me.  
 I am on friendly terms with all living beings,  
 I have no animosity towards any living being.  
 May all my wrongdoings come to nothing (*tassa micchāmi dukkaḍaṃ*).

*Traditional Jain Prayer*

The prayer is also used when beginning the veneration of an image of a *Tīrthankara*.

See also: **Dasha-Lakṣhaṇa-Parvan, Paryuṣhaṇa, pratikramaṇa.**

**miḥrāb** (A/P) *Lit.* a prayer niche; an arched recess on the inside of a mosque wall indicating the direction of Mecca (the *qiblah*), the direction to be faced at the time of the five daily prayers (*namāz*), and before which the *imām* stands to lead the congregation in prayer; also, a prayer niche in a private home or other building; also, in a mundane sense, a small upper room in a house, a seat of honour in an assembly, and a king's throne where he sits, veiled from the common people;<sup>1</sup> possibly related to the Arabic verb *ḥariba* (to do battle), connoting war and the place of war, since the *miḥrāb* represents the place of conflict between the spirit and Satan<sup>2</sup> (*i.e.* the *naḥs*, the lower mind).

The *miḥrāb* was introduced around 90 AH (709 CE). During the time of the Prophet himself, a stone was used at *Qubā'* (the first mosque) in Madīnah to mark the direction of Mecca. The earliest surviving *miḥrāb* may be in the chamber beneath the arch in the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem, built as a shrine for pilgrims at the same site as the *Masjid al-Aqṣá* (Farther Mosque). The site is sacred to both Jews and Muslims.

In Sufism, the *miḥrāb* is used as a symbol for either the spiritual goal towards which the love and attention of the seeker is directed, *i.e.* the divine Beloved, or the inner place where the devotee focuses the attention upon God. Rābi'ah writes that God is the sole focus of her devotion:

My peace, O my brothers, is in solitude,  
and my Beloved is always with me;  
Nothing can take the place of His love:  
it is the test for me among mortal beings;  
Whenever I contemplate His Beauty,  
He is my *miḥrāb*; my *qiblah* is towards Him. . . .

You are my joy and my life, eternally.  
You were the source of my life  
and from You has come my ecstasy.  
I have separated myself from all created beings:  
My hope is for union with You,  
that is the object of my desire.

*Rābi'ah, in al-Rawḍ al-Fā'iḳ, AFH p.214; cf. in RM p.12*

‘Aṭṭār says that those who accompany him to the inner “monastery” will automatically find a new focus for their love and attention – the love of the divine beloved:

If you come to the monastery (*dayr*) with us,  
 you will choose another *miḥrāb*;  
 And from the notebook of our love,  
 you will read a few lines.

*ʿAṭṭār, in Awrād al-Aḥbāb wa Fuṣūṣ al-Ādāb, AAF2 p.247*

In Sufi imagery, the arch of the *miḥrāb* is often compared to the curved eyebrow of the master, itself regarded as a symbol of the divine beauty of the master within. Thus, Saʿdī, speaking of the master as the “idol”, writes that the beauty of the beloved is of far greater attraction than the *miḥrāb* of the mosque. It is to this divine inner beloved that his devotion is directed:

Every devotee before whose mind’s eye that idol (*ṣanam*) passes,  
 looks at her eyebrows, and rejects the *miḥrāb*.

*Saʿdī, Ṭayyibāt 14:3, KSSS p.245; cf. TOS p.21*

By taking the “beloved’s face” as his focus of worship rather than the traditional *miḥrāb*, he has laid himself open to the attentions of the *muḥtasib*, the public upholder of Islamic religious law, empowered to dispense justice to Muslims who neglect religious rites. But should the *muḥtasib* happen to “gaze at the beloved’s face”, says Saʿdī, then he will automatically understand:

Let the *muḥtasib* gaze at the beloved’s face:  
 it is the *miḥrāb*, I the worshipper.

*Saʿdī, Ṭayyibāt 361:2, KSSS p.328; cf. TOS p.484*

Some Sufis have spoken of the *miḥrāb-i abrū* (prayer niche of the eyebrow), as the focus of the devotee’s inner devotions. Ḥāfiẓ says:

Turn toward the prayer niche (*gūshah-i miḥrāb*) of the eyebrow  
 of the friend (*abrū-yi dūst*), where fortune lies.

Admit your need, abase your countenance:  
 there in prayer in bitter entreaty beg before her.

*Ḥāfiẓ, Dīvān, DHA p.223, DIH p.357;*

*cf. DHWC (473:2) p.783, in SSE1 pp.7–8*

Speaking poetically, he also writes:

When in my prayer,  
 I remembered the arch of your eyebrow (*kham-i abrū-yi-tū*):  
 such a state came over me that even the *miḥrāb* lamented.

*Ḥāfiẓ, Dīvān, DHA p.71, DIH p.159;*

*cf. DHWC (230:1) p.419, in SSE3 p.80*



Sanā'ī observes that everyone is absorbed in something or another. He is absorbed in the divine beloved:

Everyone has a *miḥrāb* somewhere:

Sanā'ī's *miḥrāb* is your alley.

*Sanā'ī, Dīvān, in FNI3 p.132*

See also: **masjid**.

1. See “miḥrāb,” in *Lughat-Nāmah, LMD*.
2. See *Ghiyāth al-Lughāt, GLMN* p.402; see “miḥrāb,” in *Lughat-Nāmah, LMD*.

**mikdash, kodesh** (He) *Lit.* holy place; a shrine, a sanctuary; a place dedicated to God where holiness can be experienced; in the Bible, the consecrated place where it was believed God dwelt during the Israelites' forty years in the wilderness.

After their exodus from Egypt and before they had conquered and settled in the land of Canaan – and thus, prior to the building of the Temple in Jerusalem – the ancient Israelites are said to have wandered in the Sinai desert for forty years.<sup>1</sup> With them, according to the biblical story, they carried a sanctuary (*mikdash* or *kodesh*), also known as the *ohel mo'ed* (tent of the meeting) or the *mishkan* (dwelling place, the tabernacle). Within it was the holy of holies (*kodesh kodashim*), where the ark of the covenant, containing the Ten Commandments, engraved on two stone tablets, was kept.<sup>2</sup> The pillar of fire and the column of cloud or smoke that are said to have accompanied the *mikdash*<sup>3</sup> signified God's presence in the sanctuary. Historically, the practice of travelling with a portable sanctuary was probably adopted from the Canaanites and other surrounding peoples.

The “sanctuary” has both a literal and a symbolic meaning. According to *Exodus*, God commanded Moses to instruct the Israelites, saying:

Let them make Me a sanctuary (*mikdash*),  
that I may dwell among them.

*Exodus 25:8, JCL*

This seems to refer to an outer building, but many other biblical passages carry a double meaning – inner as well as outer. Just as a sanctuary is where people can find rest and refuge, so the divine sanctuary or refuge within is where God can be found. There are passages among the *Psalms* and in *Jeremiah*, for instance, which indicate that the sanctuary had an inner meaning. God can be seen in His full glory and power within the inner sanctuary of every individual. Glory (*kavod*), here, refers to inner light. The psalmist yearns

to see Your power and Your glory (*kavod*),  
as I have seen You in the sanctuary (*kodesh*).

*Psalms 63:3; cf. JCL*

Symbolically, God is also found on His throne in the inner sanctuary, the throne referring to eternity, the highest spiritual 'realm'. As it says in *Jeremiah*:

A glorious high throne from the beginning  
is the place of Our sanctuary (*mikdash*).

*Jeremiah 17:12, JCL*

The sanctuary carried by the Israelites was a way of reinforcing the sense that God was always present with them. According to their belief, God or His spirit (*ruah*) would alight in the 'holy of holies' and there manifest His presence. Similarly, the column of cloud and the pillar of fire that are said to have accompanied them, the one by day and the other by night,<sup>4</sup> indicate the intensity of their experience of God's living presence. Medieval Jewish mystics associated the pillars of cloud and fire with the *Shekhinah*,<sup>5</sup> a personification of God's immanent presence, which they believed was always with the ancient Israelites during their wanderings. The *Zohar* elaborates on several biblical passages:

Rabbi Jose then opened a discourse: . . . "When Israel," he said, "were journeying in the wilderness, the *Shekhinah* went in front of them, as it is written: 'And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud, to lead them on the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light.' They on their side followed its guidance; wherefore it is written: 'Thus says the Lord: I remember you, the affection (*hesed*) of your youth, . . .; how you followed after Me in the wilderness, etc.'<sup>6</sup> The *Shekhinah* was accompanied by all the clouds of glory, and when it journeyed the Israelites took up their march, as it says: 'And whenever the cloud was taken up from over the tent, then after that the children of Israel journeyed onwards, etc.'<sup>7</sup> And when the *Shekhinah* ascended, the cloud also ascended on high, so that all men looked up and asked: 'Who is this that is coming out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke?'"<sup>8</sup>

*Zohar 1:176b; cf. JCL*

The *Zohar* also interprets the "pillar of cloud" and the "pillar of fire" as symbols of the *sefirot* (emanations of divine qualities or attributes):

"And the pillar of the cloud went from before them and stood behind them."<sup>9</sup> What was this pillar of cloud? Rabbi Jose said that it was the

cloud that is always seen with the *Shekhinah*, the cloud into which Moses entered. Rabbi Abba said that it was that which supports the *zaddik* (righteous one), coming from the side of grace (*hesed*, mercy), wherefore it went by day, while there was another cloud which went by night and was called ‘pillar of fire’. Rabbi Simeon said that the pillar of cloud by day represented Abraham (*Hesed*, Mercy), and the pillar of fire by night, Isaac (*Gevurah*, Might), both attributes being united in the *Shekhinah*.

*Zohar 2:51b; cf. JCL*

The *Zohar* symbolically links the pillars of cloud and fire with the divine qualities (or *sefirot*) of mercy and might, which in turn are understood to correspond to the biblical patriarchs. Thus the pillar of cloud is identified with *Hesed*, the attribute or *sefirah* of mercy, embodied by Abraham; and the pillar of fire is identified with *Geruvah*, also called *Din* (Judgment), the *sefirah* of divine power and judgment, associated with the patriarch Isaac. According to the *Zohar*, both of these contrasting attributes are united in the *Shekhinah*. This is how the duality of mercy and judgment are resolved in the divine power of God’s presence, the *Shekhinah*. The *mikdash* therefore symbolized the complete protection of the divine presence:

And the pillar of the cloud removed from before them and stood behind them. What was this pillar of cloud? Rabbi Yosi said that it was the cloud which is always seen with the *Shekhinah*, the cloud into which Moses entered.<sup>10</sup> Rabbi Abba said that it was that which supports the *zaddik*, coming from the side of grace (the divine quality or *sefirah* of *Hesed*), wherefore it went by day, while there was another cloud which went by night and was called ‘pillar of fire’. Rabbi Simeon said that the pillar of cloud by day represented Abraham (mercy), and the pillar of fire by night, Isaac (might or judgment), both attributes being united in the *Shekhinah*, through the agency of the level mentioned by Rabbi Abba.

*Zohar 2:51b; cf. JCL*

See also: **brit, holy of holies** (2.1), **sanctuary** (8.2).

1. *Exodus* 15–40, specifically 16:35.
2. The ark is first mentioned in *Exodus*, and then throughout *Deuteronomy*, *Joshua*, *Judges*, *1 Samuel*, *2 Samuel*, *1 Kings*, *1 Chronicles*, *2 Chronicles*, *Psalms*, and *Jeremiah*.
3. *Exodus* 13:21–22; *Neḥemiah* 9:19.
4. *Exodus* 13:21–22.
5. *Zohar* 2:51b.
6. *Jeremiah* 2:2.

7. *Exodus* 40:36–37.
8. *Song of Songs* 3:6.
9. *Exodus* 24:18.
10. *Exodus* 24:18, 33:8.

**min dūn Allāh** (A) *Lit.* others (*min*) besides (*dūn*) God (*Allāh*); idols. See **but**.

**mi'rāj** (A/P) *Lit.* ladder; a series of steps or stairs; anything by which an ascent is made; thus, ascension, ascent; in Islam, the Ascension of the Prophet (*al-Mi'rāj al-Nabī*) through the seven heavens and beyond, into the presence of God, escorted by the angel *Jabrā'il* (Gabriel), after making the Night Journey (*al-Isrā'*) from Mecca to Jerusalem; in practice, the two terms, *al-Mi'rāj* and *al-Isrā'*, are often used interchangeably for the same event; in Sufism, the mystic ascent of the soul, sometimes called the *mi'rāj al-qalb* (ascent of the heart); rising above the physical level of the creation and entering the higher, subtle realms; the 'ladder' by which the souls ascend on leaving their bodies.

Elaborated considerably in the Muslim tradition, the story of Muḥammad's Night Journey and ascent is based upon two brief passages in the *Qur'ān*. They contain no mention of an ascent (*mi'rāj*), and details are left open to interpretation:

Glorified be He who carried His servant by night (*isrā'*)  
from the sacred place of worship (*al-masjid al-ḥarām*)  
to the far distant place of worship (*al-masjid al-aqṣá*),  
the neighbourhood whereof we have blessed,  
that we might show Him of our tokens!

Lo He, only He, is the Hearer, the Seer.

*Qur'ān 17:1; cf. MGK*

And:

By the star when it sets,  
your comrade errs not, nor is he deceived,  
nor does he speak of his own will.  
It is no less than an inspiration sent down to him,  
taught by one mighty in power, endued with wisdom.

When he (Gabriel) appeared he was on the uppermost horizon;  
Then he approached and came closer  
until he was distant two bows' length or nearer,  
and he revealed unto his servant that which he revealed.

The heart in no way falsified that which it saw.  
Will you then dispute with him concerning what he saw?

And verily he saw him (Gabriel) yet another time  
by the Lote Tree of the utmost boundary (*Sidrat al-muntahá*),  
nigh unto which is the garden of abode.  
When that which shrouded did enshroud the Lote Tree,  
the eye turned not aside nor yet was it overbold –  
Verily he saw one of the greater revelations of his Lord.

*Qur'ān 53:1–18; cf. AYA, MGK*

In later times two mosques, built at Mecca and Jerusalem, were named *al-Masjid al-Ḥarām* (the Sacred Mosque) and *al-Masjid al-Aqṣá* (the Farther Mosque), respectively. The revelation is said to have taken place on the twenty-seventh of *Rajab* (the seventh lunar month) in 610. According to one account, the Prophet, in the company of the angel *Jabrā'īl* (Gabriel), ascended to heaven from the Farther Mosque in Jerusalem on the back of a white, winged, horse-like creature, *Burāq*, 'splitting the moon (*shaqq al-qamar*)' in two and rising through the seven heavens. In each of the heavens, he is greeted by one of the prophets: Adam, Jesus, Joseph, Idrīs (Enoch), Aaron, Moses, and Abraham. These provide a validation of his ascent and indicate that his reach is higher than theirs. In fact, there comes a point, where even *Jabrā'īl* can go no further, and Muḥammad has to go on alone, until he reaches the divine presence. It is also said that the chain of his door was swinging when he left and was still moving upon his return.

There are a number of variations of the story among the *ḥadīth* and in the hagiographic literature concerning Muḥammad. Some accounts make no mention of *Burāq*, and Muḥammad ascends by means of a ladder. Some mention *Kawthar*, the river in paradise, while others do not; some mention a visit to paradise and hell, but others do not. The prophets he encounters, and where he encounters them, also vary from one account to another. According to the account of Ibn Ishāq as related by Ibn Hishām in his *Kitāb Sīrat Rasūl Allāh* ('Book of the Life of the Messenger of *Allāh*'):

I have been told that al-Ḥasan said: The Messenger of God, God's peace and blessings on him, said: "While I was sleeping in the sanctuary (by the *Ka'bah*), *Jabrā'īl* came to me and roused me with his foot. I sat up but saw nothing, so I went back to sleep. He came and roused me with his foot a second time, and I sat up, and seeing nothing went back to sleep. He came and roused me with his foot a third time. I sat up, he took my arm, and I rose with him. He took me out to the door of the place of prayer (*masjid*), and there was a white beast, part mule and part donkey. The beast had two wings for thighs with which he

would propel his lower legs, placing his hooves as far as his eye could see. He mounted me on himself and took me out.” ...

‘Abd Allāh ibn Mas‘ūd used to say – as it has come down to me – that *Burāq* was brought to the Messenger of God. She was a beast who used to carry prophets before his (Muḥammad’s) time. In each stride she would place her hooves as far as her eyes could see. He was mounted on her. His companion (generally presumed to mean *Jabrā’īl*) went out with him to see the signs between the heavens and the earth, until he came at last to the House of the Sanctified (*Bayt al-Muqaddas*). There he found Ibrāhīm (Abraham) and Mūsá (Moses) and ‘Īsá (Jesus) in a group of prophets who had been assembled for him.

After he performed the prayer with them he was given three vessels; a vessel containing milk, a vessel containing wine, and a vessel containing water. (He said: So the Envoy of God, God’s peace and blessings on him, said): “I heard a voice say, as these vessels were offered to me: ‘If he takes the water, he drowns and his community drowns. If he takes the wine, he goes astray and his community goes astray. If he takes the milk, he receives guidance and his community receives guidance.’” (The Prophet said): “So I took the vessel of milk and drank from it. *Jabrā’īl* then said to me: ‘You and your community have received guidance, Muḥammad, and wine has been forbidden to you.’” ...

Someone about whom I have no doubts told me of Abū Sa‘īd al-Khudrī, God’s peace and blessings on him, that he said: I heard the Messenger of Allah, God’s peace and blessings on him, say: “When I was no longer occupied with what had occurred in the *Bayt al-Muqaddas*, I was given a ladder (*mī‘rāj*) that was as fine as anything I have ever seen. It was the same as that ladder to which a dying person turns his eyes when his time is at hand. My friend led me up it and brought me all the way to one of the doors of heaven, said to be the door of the Guardians. An angel, said to be Ismā‘īl (Ishmael), was in charge of them. Under his command were twelve thousand angels, with twelve thousand more angels under each one of them.” (Al-Khudrī said the Prophet, as he would tell this *ḥadīth*, would say: “No one knows the troops of your Lord except Him.”) “When he brought me in, Ismā‘īl said: ‘Who is that, O *Jabrā’īl*?’ ‘Muḥammad,’ he replied. ‘Has he been sent for?’ Ismā‘īl asked. ‘Yes,’ replied *Jabrā’īl*. Upon hearing that, Ismā‘īl wished me well.”

*Ibn Hishām, Kitāb Sīrat Rasūl Allāh 1:263–71; cf. in EIM pp.54–56*

The account then continues with a detailed description of the ascent through the seven heavens and with Muḥammad’s receipt of the Muslim obligation to pray five times daily.

The account of Muḥammad's *Mi'rāj* is mirrored to some extent in a revelational account attributed to Abū Yazīd al-Bisṭāmī of a similar trip through the seven heavens, of which the most well-known version is to be found in 'Aṭṭār's *Tadhkirat al-Awliyā'*.<sup>1</sup> Such accounts are a common literary *genre* in the literature of the ancient Middle East, especially among Jewish and Christian writings. In the majority of instances, the central figure is a well-respected prophet of the past who is guided through the heavens in the company of an angel.

The details of the far simpler Quranic account have been used in Sufism to provide names for the higher stages of the soul's ascent, in particular, *qāba qawsayn* (two bows' length), *aw adnā* (or nearer), and *Sidrat al-muntahā* (Lote Tree of the utmost boundary). Ibn al-'Arabī observes that God has created the creation through "descent (*nuzūl*)", and the soul returns to Him through ascent (*mi'rāj*). Here, a spiritual ascent is implied:

Return what belongs to Him, and take what belongs to you! He possesses descent (*nuzūl*), and we possess ascent (*mi'rāj*).

*Ibn al-'Arabī, Meccan Revelations 1:41.31,  
FMIA1 (Muqaddimah 1:1) p.70, SPK p.181*

Rūmī says that this ascent (*mi'rāj*) is one of love:

Love is an ascent (*mi'rāj*) toward the throne of the Lord of beauty:  
read the tale of the *mi'rāj* from the lover's face.

*Rūmī, Dīvān-i Shams-i Tabrīz 133:1532, KSD1 p.87; cf. in SSE3 p.70*

The essence of the experience was the vision of God – all else was secondary:

In the *mi'rāj*, the quest was vision of the Beloved;  
It was but secondary that the empyrean and the angels  
were also shown.

*Rūmī, Maṣnavī II:2226; cf. MJR2 p.336*

The path of spiritual ascent, he says, is that of annihilation of self. It is one of inner transformation rather than translocation:

If you stand in the rank of those  
who make the (spiritual) ascension (*mi'rājiyān*),  
self-annihilation will bear you aloft, like *Burāq*.  
It is not like the ascent (*mi'rāj*) of a piece of earth to the moon,  
but like the ascent (*mi'rāj*) of cane to sugar.  
It is not like the ascent (*mi'rāj*) of vapour to the sky,  
but like the ascent (*mi'rāj*) of an embryo to rationality.

The steed of self-annihilation becomes a goodly *Burāq*:  
 it brings you to Existence, if you are nonexistent.  
 Its hoof brushes the mountains and seas  
 until it puts the world of sense perception behind.  
 Set foot in the ship and keep going swiftly,  
 like the soul (*jān*) going towards the soul's beloved.  
 Without hands or feet, go to eternity in the same fashion  
 as that in which the spirits sped from nonexistence.

*Rūmī, Maṣnavī IV:552–58; cf. MJR4 pp.302–3*

Sufis have always understood the experience in mystical terms, and the story contains a number of elements supporting this interpretation. Jerusalem is a common metaphor in the ancient literature for the holy 'city' of God, within. The Farther Mosque is also interpreted as the dwelling place of the spiritual Beloved.<sup>2</sup> 'Splitting the moon', as mentioned in the *Qur'ān*, refers to a stage of inner ascent as the soul and mind leave the body and enter the astral realms. As the soul currents concentrate together and the inner vision begins to open, the light appears like that of the moon – cool, clear, steady and round. The soul passes into this light.

That the chain on Muḥammad's door was still swinging upon his return can be interpreted both literally and symbolically. Literally, mystics can rise to God and return in no time at all. Metaphorically, the body has commonly been described by mystics as a fetter to the soul. When the soul leaves the body, it breaks these chains, leaving them swinging freely. Once a soul has learnt to undertake the journey into the inner realms on a regular basis, the soul remains unchained, the door remains permanently open.

Although Muḥammad ultimately had to leave *Jabrā'il* and travel on alone, the accompaniment of *Jabrā'il* indicates that no soul can travel alone through the inner realms. In the case of a disciple whose master has access to these realms, the accompanying 'angel' is the astral and higher forms of his own master. Alternatively, Rūmī maintains that *Jabrā'il* represents the human mind and intellect, which can accompany the soul only so far, after which the soul relinquishes their company.<sup>3</sup>

However, revelation and ascent in the company of an angel who shows and explains the way was a literary genre of the Middle East for many centuries before Muḥammad, and it is probably here that the origins of this aspect of the story may be sought.

See also: **aw adnā** (8.1), **Gabriel** (4.2), **Islam** (1.10), **al-masjid al-aqṣá, qāba qawsayn** (8.1), **Sidrat al-muntahá** (4.1).

1. *Tadhkirat al-Awliyā'* 1, *TANI* pp.172–76.



2. E.g. Anṣārī, *Song of the Dervish*, BWIC p.215; Rūmī, *Maṣnavī* IV:1146, 1313–14.
3. E.g. Rūmī, *Maṣnavī* I:1066–67, IV:3801–8.

**mi'rāj al-qalb** (A), **mi'rāj-i qalb** (P) *Lit.* ascent (*mi'rāj*) of the heart (*qalb*); the ascent of the soul from the body, as described by 'Ayn al-Quḍāt Hamadānī:

When God's pre-eternal favour wills that the wayfarer be engaged in the heart's ascension (*mi'rāj al-qalb*), from the flame of "It is the fire of God kindled, which leaps up over the hearts of men",<sup>1</sup> he sends a ray to strike him. Struck by this flaming ray, the wayfarer sloughs off the skin of humanity and exits from the domain of humankind. The experience of the mystical state causes the wayfarer to realize the significance of, "Every soul will taste of death,"<sup>2</sup> and the meaning of death on the mystic path.

'Ayn al-Quḍāt Hamadānī, *Tamhīdāt* 70, *TQH* p.51; cf. in *HSLI* p.320

See also: **mawt ikhtiyārī** (8.3), **mi'rāj**.

1. *Qur'ān* 104:6–7.
2. *Qur'ān* 3:185, 21:35, 29:57.

**misbahah** (A/P) (pl. *maṣābiḥ*) *Lit.* to glorify; a rosary, usually of thirty-three or ninety-nine beads, one for each of the names of *Allāh*; also called a *subḥah* or *tasbīḥ*.

See also: **tasbīḥ**.

**mizuko kuyō** (J) *Lit.* water child (*mizuko*) ritual with offerings (*kuyō*); foetus memorial service; a Japanese ceremony, often performed in a Buddhist temple, in which offerings are made to the spirits of stillborn babies, and miscarried or aborted foetuses. A *kuyō* refers to a ritual at which offerings are made.

*Mizuko kuyō* originated as an offering to the celestial *bodhisattva* Jizō Bosatsu (S. Kshitigarbha), regarded as the patron saint of travellers, firemen, expectant mothers, children, miscarried and stillborn infants, victims of infanticide, and aborted foetuses. Jizō is believed to convey the spirits of dead children and foetuses to the next world. During the Edo period (1603–1868), when Japan was ruled by the *Tokugawa* shogunate, the ritual absorbed the

features of existing rites for the spirits of the departed and evolved into a ceremony for the spirits of aborted fetuses and the victims of infanticide. Famine was common during this period, and parents may have decided on extreme measures rather than expose a child to the likelihood of death by starvation and disease.

In the past, a dead child or foetus would be buried beneath the parents' house, where it was believed that it would be washed away, later surfacing as a natural spring. Such springs were regarded as the origin of life, so the washing away of the child was believed to lead naturally to rebirth. From the water of the womb, the child would return to its original watery state. The name *mizuko* (water child) has become the modern term for a foetus.

Since the 1970s, the *mizuko kuyō* ritual has become more prevalent, and special shrines have been created for the purpose. Abortion became legal in Japan in 1948, and in present times it results in over a million aborted fetuses per year. This large number causes feelings of guilt, uneasiness and sadness, especially among those who have undergone the procedure, as well as in families and society in general. In order to appease the potentially angry spirits of the aborted fetuses, the *mizuko kuyō* is held annually on the anniversary of the abortion or during Buddhist festivals especially dedicated to deceased ancestors, particularly the spring equinox, the summer solstice, and the Obon festival for departed spirits. Images, usually little statuettes, are available at temples where the ceremony is performed for a fee. These are dressed in miniature baby clothes or a bib is tied around its neck, inscribed with the name of the child, often with words of apology and regret, and dedicated to the spirit of the foetus. During the ceremony, relatives make offerings to the image and pray to Jizō on behalf of the aborted foetus.

Not all Buddhists condone the practice. *Jōdo Shinshū*, one of the Pure Land Buddhist schools, is officially opposed to it, arguing that it supports the superstition that the spirits of the dead can harbour anger and resentment against the living, and can even put a curse on them. Others note that it has been commercialized through advertising, preying on the guilt of mothers who have undergone an abortion, and the possibility that the departed spirit may be in distress. Others observe that, like other memorial services, the ceremony may bring some comfort to the mothers, especially since it is believed to result in a better rebirth for the spirit of the foetus.

See also: **Buddhist festivals.**

**monastery** (Gk. *monastērion*) From the Greek *monazein* (to live alone); the residence of a religious community, especially of monks, living under monastic vows in greater or lesser seclusion from secular society, and bound by the rule of their particular order. See **monasticism.**

**monasticism** From the Greek *monastērion* (monastery), from *monazein* (to live alone); a religious movement whose members attempt to practise the essence of their religion in a focused way, beyond the requirements of both the laity and the leadership of their religion, especially as regards prayer, contemplation, meditation, and good works; originally used for Christian groups, the term is now applied to similar institutions in Buddhism, Hinduism, Jainism, and Daoism.

The father of Christian monasticism is generally agreed to have been the Egyptian hermit, Antony the Great (c.251–356). The son of wealthy parents, but orphaned while still a child, Antony gave away his wealth at the age of twenty, joining a group of ascetics near his home village. Seeking greater solitude, he gradually moved deeper into the desert, but his fame spread, and many sought him out for his advice and blessings. Disciples also flocked to him, forming small desert colonies that Antony shepherded into the first communities of Christian monks. Later that same century, Basil the Great (fl.379), Bishop of Caesarea, brought monasticism to the towns and cities by introducing charitable work as an acceptable monastic discipline. He and his sister, Macrina the Younger, founded two monastic communities on their family estate in Cappadocia, one for men and the other for women.

Monasticism spread rapidly throughout the Eastern Church, from the fourth to the seventh centuries. By 1050, it was established at Kiev (in the Ukraine), and in Moscow by 1354. In the Western Church, it developed more slowly, adopted at first by St Augustine in the fifth century as a suitable lifestyle for the clerics of a bishop's household and for orders of female virgins. The ascetic life advocated by the early desert fathers was practised by ascetics and hermits in Gaul, who found leadership in St Martin (c.316–397), Bishop of Tours. From his monastery at Marmoutier, evangelizing monks travelled in all directions, settling on the western isles of Scotland, the Celtic coasts of northern and southern Britain, and in Ireland, where a strong literary tradition developed.

The first great monastic rule for both monks and nuns was laid down by St Benedict of Nursia (c.480–547) at his monastery at Monte Cassino in Italy. Based on previous monastic precepts, the Rule of St Benedict covers all aspects of monastic community life from the authority of the abbot, to ascetic practices, to the twenty-four hour schedule of prayers and hymns. The Benedictines, as those who followed his rule came to be called, also took vows of obedience, poverty, and chastity. The rule spread gradually, supplanting other rules, and becoming the basis on which the rules of new orders were founded. Over the following centuries, further orders and suborders were founded with varying emphasis in their ideals of prayer, contemplation, penance, charity, social service, teaching, the propagation of Christianity, and so on. Some were cloistered, others performed active service in the community. In medieval times, monasticism played an important role in society, making significant contributions to learning, culture, and the economy.<sup>1</sup>

Although traditionally associated with the Catholic and Orthodox Churches, a nineteenth-century renewal of interest in monasticism saw the founding of some Protestant communities. In the mid-twentieth century, the ecumenical Taizé community was founded at a small village in Burgundy, France, and an associated community of sisters was established at Grandchamp, near Neuchâtel, Switzerland.

See also: **Christianity** (1.5).

1. See “Christian monasticism,” *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 2001.

**monism** A philosophical position which states that there is only one fundamental principle (*e.g.* matter, mind, or spirit) in existence, and that everything is a part of that.

See also: **monotheism**.

**monotheism** From the Greek *monos* (only) + *theos* (god); a comparatively recent term coined for the belief that there is one supreme God who is present and active in every part of His creation, but yet remains distinct from the material creation; the basis of religions such as Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Many of the religions of the world’s indigenous people are also essentially monotheistic, yet acknowledge the existence of other deities, as manifestations of the one God, whom they may also worship. Probably all mystics have also taught the existence of one God, but some have similarly taught that there is a hierarchy of lesser powers in creation, just as there are many different forces of nature in this world that are regarded as being a part of one integrated and ordered whole. Christianity, with its conception of the Godhead as a Trinity, has been charged – notably by Islam, the most adamantly monotheistic of the three Semitic religions – with the sin of polytheism (*A. shirk*).

While monotheism is taught and accepted in Christianity as self-evident, it runs into difficulties when trying to explain the origins of evil; for if there is only one Originator, then He must also be the origin of evil. The position of the devil, too, seems incongruous in a strictly monotheistic scenario. Even so, the notion of a single deity is so deeply ingrained in Western thought that when trying to make sense of life, few consider polytheism as an option. It seems that the only options on the table for Western thinkers are monotheism or atheism. That said, a universe in which there is only one primal divine power is probably more attractive as a philosophical explanation of life than a universe with a plurality of separate powers. Even science seeks one unified field theory that integrates all known forces and phenomena,

feeling intuitively that this solution is more elegant and closer to reality than a universe driven by a plurality of separate forces.

Monotheism is to be distinguished from monism, a philosophical position which states that there is only one fundamental principle (*e.g.* matter, mind, or spirit), and that everything is a part of that. Monotheism, on the other hand, is sometimes said to posit a basic dualism: the existence of God on the one hand, and the universe on the other. Pantheism is a form of monism which maintains that God is the sole transcendent Reality of which man, nature, and the entire universe are manifestations. Mystics who have taught that everything in creation is a part of one God who is both aloof and immanent are essentially monotheists, monists, and pantheists all at the same time.

Philosophers and students of religion have spent much time and energy considering the diversity and ramifications of these philosophical and religious positions and perspectives. Mystics, on the other hand, advise finding a way to take the consciousness to a higher level where the Reality (or God) can be seen for what It (or He) actually is. They say that human conceptions of God will always remain far from the reality; that the intellect, being only a small part of the Whole, can never grasp the true nature of the Divine.

See also: **God** (2.1), **polytheism**, **shirk**.

**mosque** See **masjid**.

**moxa** (C. *àicǎo*, *ài yè*; J. *gaiyou*, *mokusa*, *yomogi*) Any of several plants of the genus *Artemisia*, especially *Artemisia argyi*; a combustible, soft and fluffy, aromatic substance made of the young, dried and refined leaves of Chinese mugwort or wormwood; a substance used by *Chán* and *Zen* Buddhist monks in China and Japan, in which small cones of moxa are burned like incense against the skin either for therapeutic purposes or as an ascetic practice; an ancient practice used in acupuncture and traditional Chinese medicine, where it is believed to have an effect on the meridians of *qì* (subtle life energy) that course through the body. The practice is known as moxibustion.

As a therapeutic practice, monks have traditionally used burning moxa to treat minor conditions and ailments, especially on the legs to alleviate the discomfort caused by long periods of sitting meditation (*zazen*). As an ascetic practice, the lighted moxa cone is placed on the skin of the arms, the chest, the forehead, or on top of the shaved head. Depending upon how long it is left to burn down, it may lightly burn the skin, leaving a blister and subsequently a mark. This may be repeated several times during a monk's monastic life, the intention being to purify the mind through pain. The marks left on the skin are regarded as tokens of the devotion, commitment, and endurance of

the monk. In Chinese monasteries, it was once traditional to burn moxa on monks' foreheads at the time of their ordination, a practice dating back to the sixteenth century, and still surviving in some East Asian monasteries.

**mudrā** (S/H), **muddā** (Pa), **phyag rgya** (T), **yìn** (C), **in** (J) *Lit.* seal, sign, signet, ring, stamp, mark, impression, image, badge, token, symbol; hence, a bodily gesture, pose, posture or sign conveying a particular meaning, just as a wave of the hand and arm signals greetings or farewell, or a military salute conveys respect and discipline; also, a bodily posture intended for a particular purpose, as in the *mudrās* associated with the various forms of *yoga*. *Mudrā* is also a name for parched grain, one of the five M's (*pañcha-makāras*) of certain tantric rites. It is also a name for the large earrings worn by the *Kānpṛhātā* order of tantric ascetics.

*Mudrās* have been prevalent from the earliest times in Hindu, Buddhist and Jain traditions, and are commonly seen in iconography depicting deities, *buddhas*, and holy men. They are an essential aspect of dance, religious art, worship, ceremonies, recitation (*japa*), and meditation. In some *mudrās*, objects such as a lotus flower or a sword held in the hand are regarded as an integral part of the *mudrā*. Tantric rituals, of both yogic and Buddhist varieties, are replete with numerous forms of *mudrā*, many of which are symbolic hand gestures.

*Mudrās* are used as symbols to convey a large number of meanings or messages. As commonly understood, *mudrās* are the signs made by particular positionings of the hand, fingers and arms, or the entire body. There are a very large number of *mudrās*, some associated with traditional meditation poses, some with ritual gestures associated with ancient sacrificial ceremonies. In Hindu and Buddhist tantric practices and rituals, as well as *Mahāyāna* Buddhism, *mudrās* are often associated with particular *mantras*. In tantric Buddhism, *mudrās* involving the entire body help a practitioner to interact with the deities. Symbolic *mudrās* are also used in dance, and are a primary aspect of Indian classical dances such as *Bharata-nāṭyam*, *Kathak*, *Kathākali*, *Kuchipudi*, *Mohiniattam*, and *Maṇipurī*.

A *mudrā* can convey proof of validity or authority. In ancient times, particular *mudrās* were used by rulers and their subjects to remind themselves of certain events or promises. Reciters of the *Vedas* used *mudrās* to remember the accent and stress of the sacred chants. They were also used as cues to help priests remember the order of ceremonies.

*Mudrās* have arisen from the observation that particular moods or states of mind are reflected in certain bodily postures. Thus a clenched fist expresses anger, a hand held up with the palm facing forward conveys peaceable intention, pointing with the forefinger and little finger (*tarjanī-mudrā*) is a threatening gesture, and so on.

The most common *mudrās* in India are those granting fearlessness and protection (*abhaya-mudrās*), those bestowing a boon or blessing (*varada-mudrās*), those associated with meditation (*dhyāna-mudrās*), and – most common of all – the *mudrā* of greeting, palms together at the level of the heart, known as the *añjali-mudrā*, *namaskāra*, or *namaste* (bowing to you, I bow to the Divine in you).

The *abhaya-mudrā*, of which there are several variations, is a hand and arm gesture communicating fearlessness, protection, benevolence and peace, commonly seen in artistic representations of the Buddha and celestial *bodhisattvas*. The right arm is bent with the palm raised, facing forwards with the fingers together. Other common *mudrās* seen in representations of the Buddha are the *dharmachakra mudrā* (wheel-of-Dharma *mudrā*), in which the thumb and first finger of each hand are formed into a circle, and the *bhūmi-sparsha mudrā* (earth-touching *mudrā*), in which the right hand touches the earth, calling upon it as witness to the Buddha's enlightenment. Many specific hand *mudrās* are associated with particular *buddhas*, *bodhi-sattvas* and deities, and provide a means of identifying the figure represented.

Numerous *mudrās* are used in Jain meditational and ceremonial practices. The three most commonly encountered are *jina-mudrā* (conqueror pose), with the feet about four inches apart, the heels being slightly closer than the toes, the hands hanging loosely at one's side, and the gaze fixed on the tip of the nose; the *yoga-mudrā*, a sitting posture in which the hands are placed on the abdomen with the fingers flat, interlocked between the fingers of the other hand, the elbows tucked in to the side of the abdomen; and the *muktā-shukti mudrā* (pearl-oyster pose), in which the two hands are placed together forming an oval, like an oyster shell, with the fingers and bottom of the palms near the wrists touching, but with a space between the palms and fingers, the hands being raised so as to be either close to or touching the middle of the forehead. These *mudrās* are used either during meditation or at various junctures during Jain ceremonies.

In Indian and Tibetan tantric Buddhism, '*mudrā*' has developed a wide range of meaning, in addition to that of 'gesture' or 'posture'. Evolving over several centuries, '*mahāmudrā*' (great symbol) has come to be a catch-all symbol or term for a particular range of Tibetan and Japanese tantric teachings. Within this spectrum of meaning, it also refers to the nature of Reality that is 'stamped' like a seal upon all things, a meditation practice that enables realization of this Reality, a blissful mystical experience of oneness, the final attainment of buddhahood, and so on. Within the sphere of the *mahāmudrā* doctrine, practice and experience, three further *mudrās* – *karma-mudrā*, *dharmamudrā*, and *samaya-mudrā* – are commonly mentioned. In his discussion of *mahāmudrā*, the Tibetan lama Drikungpa Jigten Gönpö (1143–1217), founder of the *Drikung Kagyü* school, explains that these are understood differently at different levels of spiritual evolution.<sup>1</sup>

See also: **abhaya-mudrā**, **bhūmi-sparsha mudrā**, **dharmachakra mudrā**, **haṭha yoga** (8.5), **mahāmudrā** (8.5), **tantra** (8.5).

1. See Alexander Berzin, *Gelug-Kagyü Tradition of Mahamudra*, GKTm pp.216–18.

**muḥḍarūn** (A), **muḥẓarūn** (P) *Lit.* brought before Us; those who have been brought into the presence of God; an expression from the *Qurʾān*, referring to resurrection on the Day of Judgment, when all mankind will be “brought before Us (*muḥḍarūn*)”;<sup>1</sup> in Sufism, the presence of the soul before God in the resurrection of the soul from the grave of the body.

In his *Maṣnavī*, Rūmī first speaks of the God-intoxicated mystic, going on to describe those that are raised to spiritual life in the presence of God:

Their inner senses and understanding are tossed, wave on wave,  
in the sea of, “They are brought before Us (*muḥḍarūn*).” ...  
God gives back to the senseless ones their lost senses:  
they return to consciousness, troop after troop,  
with ringing in their ears, dancing,  
waving their hands in praise, triumphing and crying,  
“O Lord, You have brought us to life.”<sup>2</sup>  
Those crumbled skins and bones have become like horsemen,  
and have raised the dust.

*Rūmī, Maṣnavī I:3672, 3674–76; cf. MJR2 p.199*

At the time of mystical resurrection, when the souls are “brought before Us (*muḥḍarūn*)”, they become aware once more of their innate spiritual senses, as well as their higher consciousness and life essence. They hear the “ringing” of the divine Music, and from the “crumbled skin” of the body they realize their spiritual fleetness. They “have become like horsemen”, ‘riding’ on the wings of the spirit through the heavenly realms.

In Sufi terminology, when the soul comes into the presence of God, the attributes of the individual are annihilated, (*fanā*), absorbed in the Attributes of God. Yet, the soul does not become nonexistent (*ma’dūm*):

Those persons, then, who have passed from the world  
are not nonexistent, but are steeped in the divine Attributes.  
All their attributes are absorbed in the Attributes of God,  
even as the star is left without trace in the presence of the sun.  
If you demand a citation from the *Qurʾān*, O recalcitrant one,  
recite, “All of them shall be brought before Us.”



He who is brought into the (divine) presence (*muḥḍarūn*)  
 is not nonexistent (*ma'dūm*).  
 Consider well, that you may gain certain knowledge  
 of the everlasting life (*baqā*) of the spirit.  
 The spirit debarred from everlasting life is exceedingly tormented;  
 The spirit united with God in everlasting life  
 is free from every barrier.

*Rūmī, Maśnavī IV:442–47; cf. MJR4 p.296*

See also: **resurrection (in Islam)**.

1. *Qur'ān* 36:32, 53.
2. *Qur'ān* 40:11.

**mukhavastrikā** (S), **muhpattī** (Pk) *Lit.* mouth (*mukha*) covering (*vastri*); a rectangular piece of white cloth, placed across the mouth by *Shvetāmbara* Jain mendicants to avoid harm to small, winged creatures by exhalation and inhalation. *Mūrtipūjaka* (image-worshipping) monks hold the cloth in their hand and place it across their mouth when delivering a discourse or reading aloud from holy books. *Sthānakavāsī* and *Terāpanthī* mendicants tie the cloth over their mouths (which they remove when eating) by means of strings looped over their ears, like a surgical mask. Jain laypeople may also hold a *muhpattī* over their mouths during certain practices, such as *sāmāyika* (periods of meditation or other spiritual pursuits). The cloth may be replaced by a card or, in modern times, by a piece of plastic. The custom is witnessed as early as the second or third centuries CE, for example, in the North Indian city of Mathurā, where *muhpattīs* are seen in the hands of mendicants depicted at the base of *Tīrthankara* images.<sup>1</sup>

1. See “muhpattī,” *A to Z of Jainism*, AZJW.

**munājāh** (A), **munājāt** (P) *Lit.* secret conversation, a whispering to, a confidential talk, an intimate dialogue; talking to God; fervent prayer; prayers, invocations, communion; from the Arabic *najā* (to converse secretly); extempore prayer as opposed to the standardized address to the Deity in the ritual prayer (*ṣalāh*); offered after ritual prayer, sometimes drawn from the *Qur'ān* or *ḥadīth*; in mysticism, intimate converse with God; also, poetry or prayer in the form of intimate devotional converse with or loving entreaties and invocations addressed to the divine Beloved, where the mystic speaks personally from the depths of his or her own heart; as, for instance, some of

the writings of Rābī'ah Baṣṣārī and Anṣārī, whose collection of such writings, *Munājāt* ('Intimate Conversations'), remains a well-loved Sufi text, of which there are several versions:

O God, You subsist through Your own grace.  
Only You are capable of rendering thanks to Yourself.  
You are close to the knowledge of those who know You,  
but are far from what we imagine You to be...

O God, even though I am not very obedient,  
still I have no one but You...

O God, You commanded us to obey You,  
and then prevented us from doing so.  
You forbade us to disobey You,  
and then made us disobedient.  
You are slow to anger and swift to make amends:  
You have raised the banner of imperfection over our heads...

O God, You are all, we are nothing.  
You are mindful, we are heedless.  
This is all that needs be said:  
be not strict with us...

O God, others are intoxicated by wine:  
I am intoxicated by the Cupbearer (*Sāqī*).  
Their intoxication is ephemeral,  
but mine abides forever...

O Lord, what I, a mere beggar, desire of You  
is more than a thousand kings could wish.  
Everyone has a request to make of You,  
but I have come to ask You for Yourself...

O Lord, provide me with repentance.  
Provide me with obedience worthy of You.  
Before I finish my labour in this world,  
provide me with freedom from this world and the next.

*Anṣārī, Intimate Conversations, BWIC pp.183, 185, 186, 192, 188, 214*

However inspiring the words are, prayers and invocations will always be couched in human words. True *munājāh*, on the other hand, as intimate mystical communion, is a matter of divine love, experienced in the inner realms,

in the ‘tavern of ruin’. Thus, Rūzbihān speaks of a higher form of spiritual communion and intimate converse with God in which “Utterance”, “Words”, “Discourse”, “Call”, and “Whisper” are to be understood as metaphors for the divine creative power:

Whenever the dust of the *naḥs*, Satan, and the pollution of undesirable thoughts is removed from the breast of the mystic, and the heart is purged through the purity of remembrance, the breezes of the lights of the realm of ordainment (*jabarūt*) waft from the plain of the angelic realm (*ṣaḥrā’ ṣaḥn al-malakūt*) through the apertures of the Unseen to the hearts of lovers. Here, the sweetened heart experiences the pleasantness of the vision of sacred subtlety and primal nature, and the tongue of hidden pre-eternal union speaks of the secrets of nearness (to God) to hearts annihilated in pure lovingkindness.

At this point, exposed to the fragrant breezes from the garden of witnessing (*mushāhadah*, contemplation), the inner consciousness of the lover becomes attracted towards the Essence of the Eternal. The ears of the elect hearken to God’s Discourse, and through God’s subtle Utterance and the truth of His eternal Words, they hear the divine Call and Whisper of God. They become scented with the aroma of communion (*munājāh*) with God and the pleasure of God’s Words through the particular qualities of divine lovingkindness and yearning, which become revealed to the lover in union.

At this time, the mystic utters intimate entreaties (*munājāh*) to God in the form of wondrous confidences, making strange complaints and presenting his need in the throes of lovingkindness and yearning. So, secrets flow between him and God, of which even the dwellers of the angelic realm remain unaware. These secrets are essentially stations (of consciousness, *maqāmāt*) of which only those who are at these stations can be aware. This is common knowledge among the lovers. . . .

A mystic said, “How pure is the intimate communion (*munājāh*) of the lovers with their Beloved!”

Al-ʿĀrif (the gnostic, al-Ḥallāj) said: “Communion (*munājāh*) is the result of neediness for the treasures of witnessing (contemplating) the magnificent king.”

*Rūzbihān, Mashrab al-Arwāḥ* 5:38, MARB p.109; cf. in SSE3 pp.127–28

**muṇḍana** (S), **matthaka-muṇḍaka** (Pa), **teihatsu** (J) *Lit.* shaving the head (*muṇḍana*); head (*matthaka*) shaving (*muṇḍaka*); cutting off the hair, tonsure; a requisite for ordination of Buddhist monks and nuns, marking the beginning of monastic life and the leaving behind of worldly life; also, intended to help overcome vanity and conceit. A razor for shaving the head is one of the items

carried by an itinerant Buddhist monk. To “take the tonsure” or “shave the head” are common expressions for entering a monastery as a monk or nun.

According to the traditional story, the Buddha cut off his hair with a sword and shaved his head, to signify cutting himself off from worldly concerns, when he left his palace for the life of an ascetic. The practice was probably customary among the many *samaṇa* (Pa. contemplative, ascetic) schools of the time. Though traditional as a Buddhist custom, the Buddha points out that simply shaving the head does make a person spiritual:

Not by a shaven head does an undisciplined man who utters lies  
become a *samaṇa*.

*Dhammapada* 19:9; cf. DPN, DPR

See also: **pravrajya** (7.4).

**muraqqaʿ** (A/P) (pl. *muraqqaʿāt*) *Lit.* frock; the religious habit of a Sufi; more specifically, the patched frock (*jāmah-ʿi muraqqaʿ*) or garment, generally blue, once worn as a symbol of poverty by some Sufi orders, but now only rarely; a tattered and stitched garment, sometimes multicoloured, which was peculiar to Sufis;<sup>1</sup> also called a *khirqah*, which is a more general name for any kind of cloak; given by the *pīr* or *shaykh* (master) to the *ṭālib* (seeker) as a symbol of initiation into the mystic path, after a period as a novice.

According to Hujwīrī, this probationary period lasted three years:

The first year is devoted to service of the people, the second year to service of God, and the third year to watching over his own heart. . . . When these three qualifications are possessed by the novice, he may wear the *muraqqaʿ* as a true mystic, not merely as an imitator of others.

*Hujwīrī, Kashf al-Mahjūb* IV, KMM p.61, KM pp.54–55

As to who is qualified to invest novices with the *muraqqaʿ*:

Abū ʿAlī Siyāh was asked: “Who is permitted to invest novices with the *muraqqaʿ*?” He replied: “He whose vision encompasses the entire kingdom of God, so that nothing happens in the world without his knowledge.”

*Hujwīrī, Kashf al-Mahjūb* IV, KMM p.64; cf. KM p.57

Proponents of the patched garment maintain that it was worn by Muḥammad:

ʿAbd Allāh ʿUmar said, “I saw the Prophet of God sewing patches on his clothes.”

*Bākhārī, Awrād al-Aḥbāb wa Fuṣūṣ al-Ādāb*, AAF2 p.27, in SSE5 p.28

Others, however, believe that the Prophet wore the white woollen garment of the orthodox *Sunnī*:

A poet, contemporary with Ḥallāj, by the name of Abū Muḥammad Makhzūmī of Baṣrah, gives the best description of the distinction between the patched garment (*muraqqa'*) and the woollen garment (*ṣūf*), saying that the woollen garment (*ṣūf*) was the uniform of orthodox *Sunnīs* who followed strict disciplines, while the patched garment of a motley cloth was the sign of wandering monks or Hindus, referred to in the *One Thousand and One Nights*. This is his poem:

He who visits you in the patched garment of Jesus  
is no *ṣūfī*;  
For the black and white strips stitched together  
make him look like a speckled crow.

To be a *ṣūfī* means wearing the conventional (white woollen) garment in which the faithful believer in the Protector stands humbly before his Lord.

Louis Massignon, *Maṣā'ib al-Ḥallāj*, *MHM* p.65,  
in *FNI5* pp.33–34, in *SSE5* pp.29–30

Hujwīrī has much to say on the subject in his treatise on Sufism:

Know that the wearing of a *muraqqa'* is the badge of aspirants to Sufism. The wearing of these garments is a *Sunnah* (custom of the Prophet), for the Apostle said: “See that you wear woollen raiment (A. *al-ṣūf*, P. *jāmah-i pashmīn*) that you may feel the sweetness of faith in your hearts.” And, further, one of the companions said: “The Apostle wore a garment of wool (A. *al-ṣūf*, P. *jāmah-i pashmīn*) and rode upon an ass.” And, moreover, the Apostle said to ‘Āyishah: “O ‘Āyishah, do not let the garment go to waste, but patch it.” . . .

‘Umar, the son of Khaṭṭāb, wore, it is said, a *muraqqa'* with thirty patches inserted on it. Of ‘Umar, too, we are told that he said: “The best garment is that which gives the least trouble.” It is related of the Commander of the Faithful, ‘Alī, that he had a shirt of which the sleeves were level with his fingers, and if at any time he wore a longer shirt he used to tear off the ends of its sleeves. The Apostle also was commanded by God to shorten his garments, for God said: “And purify your garments,”<sup>2</sup> *i.e.* shorten them. And Ḥasan of Baṣrah says: “I saw seventy comrades who fought at Badr: all of them had woollen garments; and the greatest *Ṣiddīq* (Abū Bakr) wore a garment of wool in his detachment from the world.”

Hujwīrī, *Kashf al-Maḥjūb IV*, *KMM* pp.49–50; cf. *KM* p.45

Hujwīrī goes on to speak of a number of Sufis and well-known Muslims who wore woollen garments, patched and otherwise, adding:

It may well be the case that at the present day some persons wear patched frocks and religious habits (*muraqqa'āt-u khiraq*) for the sake of public honour and reputation, and that their hearts belie their external garb; for there may be but one champion in a host, and in every sect the genuine adepts are few. People, however, reckon as *ṣūfīs* all who resemble the *ṣūfīs* even in a single rule. The Apostle said: "He that makes himself akin to a party, either in conduct or in belief, is one of that party." But while some regard only the outward forms of their practice, others direct attention to their spirit of inward purity.

*Hujwīrī, Kashf al-Mahjūb IV, KMM p.51, KM p.46*

How the patches should be stitched was also a matter of debate:

*Muraqqa'āt* should be made with a view to ease and lightness and, when the original cloth is torn, a patch should be inserted. There are two opinions of the *shaykhs* as to this matter. Some hold that it is improper to sew the patch on neatly and accurately, and that the needle should be drawn through the cloth at random, and that no trouble should be taken. Others again hold that the stitches should be straight and regular, and that it is part of the practice of the dervishes to keep the stitches straight and to take pains therein; for sound practice indicates sound principles.

*Hujwīrī, Kashf al-Mahjūb IV, KMM p.55, KM pp.48–49*

To take pains (*takalluf*) in sewing *muraqqa'āt* is considered allowable by the *ṣūfīs* because they have gained a high reputation among the people; and since many imitate them and wear *muraqqa'āt*, and are guilty of improper acts, and since the *ṣūfīs* dislike the society of others than themselves – for these reasons they have invented a garb which none but themselves can sew, and have made it a mark of mutual acquaintance and a badge. So much so that when a certain dervish came to one of the *shaykhs* wearing a garment on which the patch had been sewn with too wide stitches (*khatt ba-pahnā āwardah būd*) the *shaykh* banished him from his presence. The argument is that purity (*ṣafā*) is founded on delicacy of nature and fineness of temperament, and undoubtedly crookedness in one's nature is not good. It is as natural to disapprove of bad actions, as it is to derive no pleasure from bad poetry.

Others, again, do not trouble themselves about clothes at all. They wear either a religious habit (*'abā*) or an ordinary coat (*qabā*), whichever God may have given them; and if He keeps them naked,

they remain in that state. I, who am ʿAlī ibn ʿUthmān al-Jullābī, approve of this doctrine, and I have practised it in my journeys. It is related that Aḥmad ibn Khaḍrūyah wore a coat when he visited Abū Yazīd, and that Shāh ibn Shujāʿ wore a coat when he visited Abū Ḥafṣ. This was not their usual dress, for sometimes they wore a *muraqqaʿ* and sometimes a woollen garment or a white shirt, as it might happen.

The human mind (*nafs-i ādamī*) has become habituated to things and is fond of customs, and when anything has become habitual to the mind, it soon grows natural; and when it has grown natural, it becomes a veil. Hence the Messenger said: “The best of fasts is that of my brother David.”

They said: “O Messenger of God, what kind of fast is that?”

He replied: “David used to keep his fast one day and break it on the next day,” in order that his soul should not become accustomed either to keeping the fast or to breaking it, for fear that he might be veiled thereby. And, as regards this matter, Abū Ḥāmid Dūstān<sup>3</sup> of Merv was the most sound. His disciples used to put a garment on him; but those who wanted it used to seek him out when he was at leisure and alone, and divest him of it. But he would never say to the person who put it on him: “Why do you put it on?” nor to the person who took it off: “Why do you take it off?” Moreover, at the present time, there is at Ghaznah – may God protect him! – an old man with the sobriquet Muʿayyad, who has no choice or discrimination with respect to his clothes; and he is sound in that degree.

Now, as to their garments being mostly blue (*kabūd*), one of the reasons is that they have made wandering (*siyāḥat*) and travelling the foundation of their Path; and a white garment does not retain its original appearance when travelling, and is not easily washed, and besides, everyone covets it. Another cause is this, that a blue dress is the badge of the bereaved and afflicted, and the apparel of mourners. And since this world is the abode of trouble, the pavilion of affliction, the den of sorrow, the house of parting, the cradle of tribulation: the (Sufi) disciples, seeing that their heart’s desire is not to be gained in this world, have clad themselves in blue, and have sat down to mourn union (with God). Others behold in the practice (of devotion) only imperfection, in the heart only evil, in life only loss of time: therefore they wear blue; for loss (*fawt*) is worse than death (*mawt*). One wears blue for the death of a dear friend, another for the loss of a cherished hope.

*Hujwīrī, Kashf al-Maḥjūb IV, KMM pp.57–59; cf. KM pp.51–53*

If the novice, having donned the *muraqqaʿ*, should be forced to tear it under compulsion of the temporal authority, this is permissible and excusable; but should he tear it of free will and deliberately, then

according to the law of the sect he is not allowed to wear a *muraqqaʿ* in future, and if he does so, he stands on the same footing as those in our time who are content to wear *muraqqaʿāt* for outward show, with no spiritual meaning.

As regards the rending of garments, the true doctrine is this, that when *ṣūfīs* pass from one stage to another they immediately change their dress in thankfulness for having gained a higher stage; but whereas every other garment is the dress of a single stage, the *muraqqaʿ* is a dress which comprises all the stages of the Path of poverty and purity, and therefore to discard it is equivalent to renouncing the whole Path. . . . Furthermore, it has been said that one who invests a novice with the *muraqqaʿ* should possess such sovereign mystical powers that any stranger on whom he looks kindly should become a friend, and any sinner whom he clothes in this garment should become a saint.

*Hujwīrī, Kashf al-Mahjūb IV, KMM pp.63–64, KM pp.56–57*

Pointing out the human tendency to externalize everything in order to create an impression, Hujwīrī adds:

A right patch is a patch that is stitched because one is poor, and not for show: if it is stitched for poverty, it is stitched right, even if it is stitched badly.

*Hujwīrī, Kashf al-Mahjūb IV, KMM p.56; cf. KM p.49*

It is not lack of wealth, he says elsewhere, that makes a person poor, nor possession of wealth that makes him rich. It is the attitude of mind.<sup>4</sup> It is said that Shaykh Shādhilī would occasionally wear costly garments in order to demonstrate that it is not money itself that stands in the way of spirituality, but attachment to it. The *Shādhilī* order have been characteristic in never wearing the patched garment.

Chosen originally for practical reasons, in time, the garment and its colour assumed undue significance:

*Ṣūfīs* traditionally wore a patched garment of dark blue; being dark, it did not require regular washing.

Abū Saʿīd Abū al-Khayr said, “Things have come to such a stage that they now sew blue patched cloaks (*muraqqaʿ*) to wear, thinking that thereby they have done everything right. They stand beside the vat of dye, telling the dyer to dip the garment an extra time therein to dye the cloth all the bluer, as they think this is the mark of a *ṣūfī*.”

*Muḥammad ibn al-Munawwar, Asrār al-Tawḥīd, AT51 p.273, in SSE5 p.28*

Many Sufis were aware, of course, that special clothing does not of itself confer spirituality:



To the true mystic there is no difference between the mantle (*‘abā*) worn by dervishes, and the coat (*qabā*) worn by ordinary people. An eminent *shaykh* was asked why he did not wear a patched frock (*muraqqa'*). He replied: "It is hypocrisy to wear the garb of the *ṣūfīs* and not to bear the burdens which Sufism entails." If, by wearing this garb, you wish to make known to God that you are one of the elect, God knows that already; and if you wish to show to the people that you belong to God, should your claim be true, you are guilty of ostentation; and should it be false, of hypocrisy. The *ṣūfīs* are too great to need a special garment for this purpose. Purity (*ṣafā*) is a gift from God, whereas wool (*ṣūf*) is the clothing of animals.

The *ṣūfī shaykhs* enjoined their disciples to wear patched frocks, and did the same themselves, in order that they might be marked men, and that all the people might keep watch over them: thus, if they committed a transgression, every tongue would rebuke them, and if they wished to sin while clad in this garment, they would be held back by shame. In short, the *muraqqa'* is the garb of God's saints. The vulgar use it merely as a means of gaining worldly reputation and fortune, but the elect prefer insults to honour, and affliction to prosperity. Hence it is said, "the *muraqqa'* is a garb of happiness for the vulgar, but a coat of mail of affliction for the elect."

*Hujwīrī, Kashf al-Mahjūb IV, KMM pp.53–54; cf. KM pp.47–48*

Although the *muraqqa'* itself has no spiritual significance, Sufis have endeavoured to remind its wearers of what it is supposed to represent, by seeking symbolic meanings:

The word for 'patched garment', *muraqqa'*, is comprised of four letters: *mīm*, *rā'*, *qāf*, and *‘ayn*.

The *mīm* signifies the completion of gnosis (*ma‘rifat*), mortification (*mujāhadat*), and submissiveness (*maẓallat*). The *rā'* signifies infinite mercy (*raḥmat*) and compassion (*ra‘fat*), asceticism (*riyāẓat*), and comfort (*rāḥat*). The *qāf* signifies the emergence of contentment (*qanā‘at*) and strength (*qūvah*), of nearness (*qurbat*) and sincere speech (*qawl-i ṣidq*). The *‘ayn* signifies the manifestation of knowledge (*‘ilm*), love (*‘ishq*) and action (*‘amal*), wherein one seeks in oneself all the qualities which the letters of the *muraqqa'* represent.

*Bākharzī, Awrād al-Aḥbāb wa Fuṣūṣ al-Ādāb, AAF2 p.30, in SSE5 pp.28–29*

Many symbolic interpretations have been given concerning the *muraqqa'*. . . . The best symbolic interpretation concerning the *muraqqa'* is this: its collar is patience; its two sleeves, fear and hope; its two gussets, contraction and expansion; its belt, self-abnegation; its hem, soundness of faith; its border, sincerity.

Better still is the following: its collar is abandonment of the society of others; its two sleeves, observance and continence; its two gussets, poverty and purity; its belt, persistence in contemplation; its hem, tranquillity in God's presence; and its border, establishment at the abode of union.

Once you have made a *muraqqa'* like this for your spiritual being, you should make one for your outer being also. I have composed a separate book on this subject, entitled *Asrār al-Khiraq wa al-Ma'unāt* ('Mysteries of Patched Frocks and Means of Livelihood'), of which the novice should get a copy.

*Hujwīrī, Kashf al-Maḥjūb IV, KMM pp.62–63; cf. KM p.56*

See also: **khirqah**, **samā'**.

1. Javād Nūrbakhsh, *Sufi Symbolism*, *FNIS* p.32, *SSE5* p.28.
2. *Qur'ān* 74:4.
3. Abū Ḥāmid Dūstān, in *Nafahāt al-Uns*, *NUJ* p.281.
4. Al-Hujwīrī, *Kashf al-Maḥjūb* XXIII, *KMM* p.455, *KM* p.349.

**mūrti** (S) *Lit.* something solid or material; embodiment, manifestation, incarnation, personification; person, form, figure, appearance; image, idol, statue, representation; the common term for an idol or image in Jain, Buddhist, and Hindu traditions. Traditionally, idols are generally sculpted out of stone or cast from copper or bronze. They may be plain or heavily costumed and ornamented.

In English, 'image' is the common term used nowadays for 'idol', perhaps because in Christianity, 'idol' was associated with pagan idols and acquired a negative connotation. The term 'idol' has also acquired a number of secular uses, which contribute to confusion over the meaning. In reality, few people worship the actual stone or metal image as the deity. They worship what the stone represents to them and the feelings that it conjures up in their minds. At best, an idol is a physical and visual aid towards generating mental feelings of faith, devotion, worship, and submission to the divine will. Conversely, to go through the motions of ritualistic image worship with the mind unfocused and wandering elsewhere, with no inner devotion, has little religious or spiritual value.

### ***In the Hindu Tradition***

The Hindu tradition is noteworthy for its plethora of deities, and their images are worshipped throughout India and elsewhere. The worship of images was probably absent from the most ancient Vedic worship, when the deities were invoked through sacrifice, offerings, prayer, and liturgy. By the time of the Maurya dynasty (322–185 BCE), however, the practice of *mūrti pūjā*

(image worship) had become widespread. Although modern culture has had its influence, the practice remains prevalent, and the production of images in metal, stone and plastic, even in the form of children's toys, is a major industry. Hindu sects holding widely different doctrines often invoke the help of the same deities.

It is generally recognized that the many Hindu deities are all subordinate to the supreme Deity. But since it is difficult for human beings to approach the divine Absolute in a personal manner, many Hindus have sought to express their devotion to God through one of the many lesser deities. Sometimes, the deity is worshipped as an expression of the supreme Being, sometimes for particular attributes or qualities the deity is presumed to possess. The three deities (*trimūrti*) – *Brahmā* the creator, *Vishṇu* the sustainer, and *Shiva* the destroyer – for example, are regarded as the three primary aspects of the Supreme, as He manifests Himself in creation. *Lakshmī* is the goddess of wealth, love, beauty, and prosperity. *Sarasvatī* is the goddess of knowledge, music, arts, learning, and wisdom. *Gaṇeśa*, the elephant-headed deity, also known as *Gaṇapati*, is the god of wisdom and learning, patron of the arts and sciences, the remover of obstacles, and the bringer of good fortune. It is customary to begin cultural events by invoking the help and blessings of *Gaṇeśa*. According to mythology, he is also the son of *Shiva* ('Auspicious', 'Favourable', 'Benevolent').

Various reasons for and benefits of the Hindu worship of images have been put forward. Idol worship is prevalent in all the major Hindu epics, such as the *Mahābhārata* and *Rāmāyaṇa*. Idols are more immediately and personally accessible than the intellectual concept of an inaccessible Deity; they provide an emotional focus for a religious life. The great number of deities provides an opportunity for individuals to choose an *ishṭa-deva* or *ishṭa-devatā* (male or female, personal deity) whose attributes (according to religious mythology) they feel are suited to their own needs and temperament. Ritualized worship (of any kind) provides a means of channelling the attention away from the world towards an awareness of the all-pervading presence of God. Praying or making offerings before an image can enable worshippers to open their hearts to the Divine, in faith and submission, acknowledging their essential ignorance and helplessness. The presence of a deity's image in the home may act as a constraint and ever-present reminder to conduct oneself as a decent human being.

While many Hindu sub-traditions acknowledge that interior meditation is the superior means of attaining communion with the Divine, a number of them also suggest that the beginner should start with *mūrti pūjā*, as an aid to concentration. Indian *sants*, on the other hand, have maintained that idol worship holds the attention in the external world. They suggest that the highest worship of God is to worship Him in His entirely spiritual manifestation – His divine creative power.

### *In the Jain Tradition*

In Jainism,<sup>1</sup> images are generally of the twenty-four *Tīrthankaras* who took birth during the present cycle of time according to Jain cosmology, together with *yakshas* and *yakshīs* (male and female, semi-divine spirits), *kshetrapālas* (deities who protect temples and shrines), and various other unliberated deities, such as *Sarasvatī*. Most *Digambaras* and those of the *Shvetāmbara Mūrtipūjaka* (image worshipper) tradition worship or venerate images in temples and domestic shrines. Outer forms of *mūrti pūjā* (image worship), known as *dravya pūjā*, are practised by the laity, but mendicant monks only practise mental worship (*bhāva pūjā*). *Mūrtipūjakas* are also known as *Derāvāsīs* (temple dwellers) or *Mandir Mārgīs* (temple followers). *Mūrtipūjakas* are distinguished from *Sthānakavāsīs* (hall dwellers), a non-image-worshipping, reform tradition established between the mid-fifteenth to early seventeenth centuries.

Once constructed, images are consecrated, following which they are worshipped daily. *Tīrthankaras* represent the highest spiritual ideal and are the perfect exemplars. Enlightened and liberated from the cycle of birth and death, they have overcome all human passions and weaknesses, and have destroyed all their *karma*. By means of meditation and the various forms of *pūjā*, including *mūrti pūjā*, the devotee attempts to imbibe their qualities and state of consciousness. However, since *Tīrthankaras* are fully liberated and enlightened beings, dwelling in *siddhaloka* beyond the confines of the material and other realms comprising the universe, they are understood to remain unmoved by human worship, and unresponsive to human prayers and entreaties for the fulfilment of desires and help with daily problems. For these functions, Jains resort to the worship of images of various deities and *yakshas*, seeking to invoke their help.

The first archaeological finds of *Tīrthankara* images are dated to around the beginning of the first century CE; but an earlier inscription found in a cave in Orissa concerning the return of an image that had been removed during the time of the fourth-century (BCE) Nanda dynasty, indicates that such images were in use at that time.

Some representations of the *Tīrthankaras* are relief carvings on stone slabs, but most are full sculptures. In both cases, the figure is represented in one of two postures: *padmāsana* (lotus posture), the cross-legged seated posture adopted for giving a discourse, or the standing *kāyotsarga* ('abandonment of the body', *i.e.* meditation) posture. Some images include the auspicious *shrīvatsa* symbol, an endless knot representing a curl of hair on the chest, one of the eight auspicious things (*aṣṭa-mangala*). Seated images of a *Tīrthankara* are sometimes portrayed as facing in all four directions. Sometimes, several or even all of the *Tīrthankaras* may be represented in one image.

The apparel of *Tīrthankara* images mirrors the separation of the two main Jain schools. *Digambara* ('sky-clad') monks observe complete nudity;

*Shvetāmbara* ('white-clothed') monks wear at least a lower garment. Before the fifth century CE, images are always nude, but with the growing division between the two schools, *Shvetāmbara* images are increasingly shown with garments. Around the same time, *Shvetāmbara* images begin to portray *Tīrthankaras* with an outward gaze, often with large enamel eyes superimposed upon the carved or moulded ones beneath, helping worshippers to interact with the image in their own minds. Often, they are given elaborate and royal ornamentation. *Digambara* images, on the other hand, are unornamented, with eyes cast down, indicating a state of meditation and detachment from the world. It is around this time, too, that symbols (*lāñchhanas*) specific to each *Tīrthankara*, found on the base of an idol, are first encountered in Jain art, identifying the particular *Tīrthankara* portrayed.

### ***In Buddhism***

Images and idols of the Buddha, reclining or seated cross-legged in the lotus posture, are widely prevalent in the Buddhist tradition, and are found in Buddhist temples. Buddhist commentators, however, reject the notion that they are worshipping the idol. They maintain that Buddhists revere or pay homage to statues of the Buddha as a memory of a wise, compassionate, and fully enlightened human being. They are revering and paying homage to what he represents rather than worshipping the stone or metal image itself. The followers of other traditions often express themselves in similar terms.

The image of a Buddha has become an international icon of peace and goodwill. As in other traditions, Buddhists use the image as a symbol to attain mental focus, leading to peace of mind. The serenity expressed in the image reminds sincere and practising Buddhists of the tranquillity they seek within themselves, of the way they truly wish to lead their lives, and provides them with the inspiration to continue on the spiritual path of meditation. It is said that Buddhists who are truly following the spiritual path, do not place personal requests before the image nor ask forgiveness of it for their misdemeanours. As in any tradition, however, much depends upon the individual attitude of mind. Spread through many lands, the terms used for an image or idol vary from country to country.

### ***Mūrti as a Vision of the Divine***

*Mūrti* is not used exclusively for idols and external images. Thus, Tukārām, a seventeenth-century Indian *sant* of Maharashtra, prays that he may experience the constant vision of the Divine, "O Lord, let Your image (*mūrti*) be always in my eyes."<sup>2</sup> A South Indian mystic, *Syāma Sāstri*, worshipper of *Kāmakshi*, as the divine Mother speaks of his inner vision of the divine image:

This form (*mūrti*) of Yours is radiant!  
You are the embodiment of all virtues!

Can this glorious form (*mūrti*) of Yours  
 be seen anywhere else in the three worlds?  
 Several times, have I experienced the vision of your lotus feet  
 due to spiritual practice in previous births!  
 I feel blessed and full of gratitude!  
 Protect me and heed my pleadings!

*Syāma Sāstri, I mūrti yinta tejomayamai; cf. in SSI2 pp.208–9*

And the great Bengali poet, Rabindranath Tagore, expresses his love of the Divine:

Your love merges in the love of Your devotees.  
 Your form (*mūrti*) fully shines  
 in the perfect union of the devotee and You.

*Rabindranath Tagore, Sangīt, Tāyī tomār ānando, in SSI2 pp.290–91*

See also: **ārātrika**, **lāñchhana**, **pūjā**, **Sthānakavāsī** (7.1).

1. See “image,” *A to Z of Jainism*, AZJW.
2. Tukārām, *Gāthā* 3, *STG1* p.4.

**muṣallā** (A), **muṣallā** (P) *Lit.* a place of prayer; also, prayer carpet, prayer mat, prayer rug. See **sajjādah**.

**mushrikūn** (A), **mushrikīn** (A/P) (sg. *mushrik*) *Lit.* associators; those who associate God (who is one) with something else, thereby implying that His nature is dual; those who conceive of something else existing alongside the One; from *shirk* (association), which means associating God with something other than Him (such as an idol) – a cardinal heresy in Islam, as decreed in the *Qur’ān*;<sup>1</sup> hence, idolaters, polytheists, pagans, unbelievers, infidels. In Sufism, anyone who fails to see the one God in everything is essentially a polytheist. In this sense, everyone in this world is a polytheist (*mushrik*), except a fully realized soul.

Among the Sufis, the greatest idol has always been understood as one’s own self that attaches itself to the external idols of material things:

Relinquish your beloved, selfish heart –  
 That pagan idol (*mushrikī*), that deceptive guide  
 that turns detachment carelessly aside.

*‘Attār, Conference of the Birds 3698, MTAN p.401; cf. CBD p.189*

See also: **but**, **shirk**.

1. *Qurʾān* 4:36, 48, 116, 6:22, 25:2.

**mysticism** The belief in or experience of a primary and essential Reality or God that transcends normal human understanding and experience, and which provides a higher understanding of all things; a school or system of meditation or contemplative prayer aimed at direct, personal experience of this higher Reality. See **Mysticism** (1.1).

**naḥw** (A/P) *Lit.* path, way; fashion, manner; also, in the context of linguistics, grammar. Sufis emphasized the limited nature of all forms of external knowledge, including *naḥw* and *fiqh* (religious law).

Rūmī, for example, tells the story of a boatman who ferries a grammarian (*naḥwī*) across a river. The *naḥwī* asks the boatman if he has ever studied *naḥw*. On learning that he has not, the *naḥwī* exclaims, “Half your life has been wasted.” A little later, when the wind casts the boat into a whirlpool, the boatman asks the *naḥwī* whether he has ever learned to swim. On learning that he has not, the boatman responds, “O *naḥwī*, your whole life has been wasted!” Using an alliterative wordplay on *naḥw* and *maḥw* (dead to self), Rūmī observes:

Know that what is needed here is *maḥw*, not *naḥw*.

If you are *maḥw*, plunge into the sea,

and do not be frightened of any peril or danger.

*Rūmī, Maṣnavī I:2841; cf. MJR2 p.155*

See also: **fiqh**, **ʿilm** (8.1), **maḥw** (8.1).

**namaskār(a) mantra** (S/H), **nav(a)kār mantra**, **namokār(a) mantra** (Pk) *Lit.* making (*kāra*) salutation (*namas*) *mantra*; making obeisance; an ancient, Jain sacred formula used as a prayer of homage, obeisance, and salutation to the five classes of great beings (*pañcha-parameshṭhin*) who are deemed worthy of worship – Jain *arahantas* (enlightened ones), *siddhas* (perfected, liberated ones), *āchāryas* (Jain mendicant leaders), *upādhyāyas* (teachers, preceptors), and *sādhus* (Jain mendicants); commonly known by its Prakrit title of *namokār mantra*; also called the *pañcha-namaskāra*. See **mantra** (8.5).

**namāz** (P) *Lit.* prayer; ritual Muslim prayers; specifically, the formal prayers recited five times a day: early morning before sunrise (*fajr*), just after noon

(*ẓuhr*), late afternoon between noon and sunset (*‘aṣr*), just after sunset (*maghrib*), and between sunset and midnight (*‘ishā’*) – effectively, dawn, noon, afternoon, sunset, and night. Though a Persian word, *namāz* is the orthodox term for prayer from Turkey to India, replacing the Arabic equivalent, *ṣalāh*.

The form and content of *namāz* is based upon the *Sunnah* (the sayings and example of Muḥammad) and the traditions of the schools of Islamic religious law. The custom of ritual prayer has arisen from the frequently repeated injunction in the *Qur’ān* to pray regularly at various times of the day,<sup>1</sup> which has been interpreted as the five particular times:

Give glory to your Lord  
before the rising of the sun and before it sets;  
Praise Him for some part of the night hours  
and at the two ends of the day,  
that you may find (spiritual) joy.

*Qur’ān 20:130; cf. AYA, KPA, MGK*

Give glory to *Allāh*, when you enter the night  
and when you rise in the morning.  
Praise Him in the heavens and on earth  
in the afternoon and at noon.

*Qur’ān 30:17–18; cf. AYA, MGK*

These special times, set aside for the remembrance of God, effectively cover all of daily life – arising from sleep, twice in the midst of the working day, evening, and bedtime. They are particular points in the twenty-four hour passage of the sun through the sky.

In a story supplied mostly from the *ḥadīth* and supported only by a brief reference in the *Qur’ān*,<sup>2</sup> Muḥammad is said to have made a Night Journey (*al-Isrā’*) to the Farther Mosque (*al-Masjid al-Aqṣā*), and from there to have made his ascent (*al-Mi’rāj*) through the heavens. On the way he meets Abraham, Moses, Jesus and other prophets, until he comes to “within two bows’ length” of God, “or nearer”.<sup>3</sup>

Muḥammad then receives a divine command that his followers should pray fifty times a day. On his return through the heavens, Moses queries Muḥammad concerning the instructions he has received. When Muḥammad tells him, Moses replies that he has had sufficient experience with the children of Israel to know that to pray fifty times a day is beyond normal human capacity, and he advises Muḥammad to return, and seek a better deal. This Muḥammad does, and gets the prayers reduced to ten. Moses still regards this as impossible for the average man, and sends Muḥammad back to renegotiate. The prayers are then reduced to five a day. Moses still thinks that this is too much to ask of average human beings, and wants Muḥammad to return once



more. But Muḥammad says that he feels ashamed to go and ask again, and so the number of daily prayers is set at five.<sup>4</sup>

Various forms of prayer are performed by the devout, including *namāz-i ma'kūs* (inverted prayer), in which the devotee suspends himself by his feet while praying, and *namāz-i tarāwīḥ* (rest), a lengthy prayer consisting of twenty *raka'āt* (rounds of prayer), performed after the night prayer during the month of *Ramaḍān*. This *namāz* is so called because the congregation sits down and rests after every fourth *rak'at* and every second *salām*.

Hujwīrī, an eleventh-century Sufi, asserts that some *shaykhs* instruct their disciples to make four hundred prostrations during the day and night, in the course of their *namāz*, as a means of habituating the mind to a sense of devotion and humility.<sup>5</sup> He also describes the traditional and external requirements for performing the daily prayers. At the same time, he suggests an inner meaning to the outer rituals:

Prayer (*namāz*) means remembrance (of God) and submission (*dhikr-u inqiyād*), but in the correct usage of legalists the term is specifically applied to the five prayers that God has ordered to be performed at five different times, and which involve certain preliminary conditions, viz.: (1) purification outwardly from dirt and inwardly from lust; (2) that one's outer garment should be clean and one's inner garment undefiled by anything unlawful; (3) that the place where one purifies oneself should be outwardly free from corruptness and sin; (4) turning towards the *qiblah*, the outer *qiblah* being the *Ka'bah* and the inner *qiblah* being the throne of God, by which is meant the mystery of divine contemplation; (5) standing outwardly in the state of power (*qudrat*) and inwardly in the garden of proximity (*qurbat*) to God; (6) sincere intention to approach God; (7) saying "Allāhu akbar (God is great!)" in the station of awe and annihilation, and standing in the abode of union, and reciting the *Qur'ān* distinctly and reverently, and bowing the head with humility and prostrating oneself with abasement, and making the profession of faith with concentration, and saluting with annihilation of one's attributes.

*Hujwīrī, Kashf al-Mahjūb XIX, KMM p.386; cf. KM p.300*

For novices, Hujwīrī sees the outer practices as more attainable than the inner:

Prayer (*namāz*) is a term that, for novices, encompasses the entire path to God, from beginning to end, and in which their (spiritual) stations (*maqāmāt*) are revealed. Thus, for novices, ablutions take the place of repentance; dependence on a spiritual director takes the place of ascertaining the (true spiritual) *qiblah*; standing in prayer (*mujāhadat*) takes the place of self-abnegation; reciting the *Qur'ān*

takes the place of inner meditation (*dhikr*); bowing the head takes the place of humility; prostration takes the place of intimacy (*uns*) (with God); and salutation (*salām*, the blessing which ends the ritual prayer) takes the place of detachment from the world and escape from the bondage of stations (*maqāmāt*).

*Hujwīrī, Kashf al-Mahjūb XIX, KMM p.387; cf. KM p.301*

Sincerity of motive is regarded as essential for prayer to be effective. What is significant is not how long a person prays, but how heartfelt it is:

When you enter into prayer (*namāz*) in sincerity, you will come forth from prayer (*namāz*) with all your desires fulfilled; but if you offer a hundred salutations without sincerity, you are still a bungler, and your work a failure.

One salutation is the same as two hundred; one prostration in sincerity is worth your standing erect a hundred times; for the prayer (*namāz*) that is a mere matter of custom is like dust that is scattered by the wind. The prayers (*namāz*) that reach God's court are those that the soul prays; the mere mimic is ever a beggar, praying unworthily, without intelligence, since he chooses the path of folly. For on this path, prayer of the spirit (*namāz-i rūḥānī*) is of more account than barren mimicry.

When you call on God, bring supplication appropriate to Him, that His good pleasure may receive you. From time to time, separated from the Real and bound up in the phenomenal, you come to pray the obligatory prayers (*farz namāz*). Without calling upon God, without self-abasement, without humility, you carelessly perform a *rak'ah* or two. You deem it prayer (*du'ā*) – I marvel if you are listened to at all! You come before God in your pride – how will God hear you when you call? Let your prayer (*namāz*) be free from self, and He will accept it as pure; if it is smirched with self, He will not receive it. The message that the tongue of anguish utters is an envoy from this world of men to Him; when it is your helplessness that sends the messenger, your cry is, “O Lord!” and His is, “Here am I (*labbayka*)!”

*Sanā'ī, Ḥadīqat al-Ḥaqīqat 1, HHGP p.70, HHS pp.141–42; cf. HHG pp.116–17*

To many Sufis, real prayer is an inner process, involving a great deal of spiritual striving and struggle:

Praying (*namāz*) and fasting is the work of the pious. To purify the heart of darkness is the work of real men.

*Kharaqānī, in Nūr al-'Ulūm, AAK p.121, in SSE3 p.81*

Your aspiration in prayers (*namāz*) should not be confined to merely speaking the words and leaving it at that. It should involve joy in committing yourself to God, for only through God can closeness be achieved.

*Junayd, in al-Ta'arruf li-Madhhab Ahl al-Taṣawwuf, TTK pp.485–86, in FNI3 p.67, in SSE3 p.81*

It is said that the meaning of prayers (*namāz*) is to become stripped of all attachments and unified with spiritual realities.

*Junayd, in al-Ta'arruf li-Madhhab Ahl al-Taṣawwuf, TTK p.486, in FNI3 p.67, in SSE3 p.81*

Whoever travels sincerely to the door of the Beloved  
will be free of desires until the Day of Judgment.  
A hundred years of a monk's prayers (*namāz*)  
would be sacrificed for one moment's supplication of the lover.

*Shaykh Bahā'ī, Kullīyāt 1153–54, KSBA p.84; cf. in SSE3 p.82*

For mystics, real prayer implies inward purity, contemplation, and spiritual ascent:

Prayers (*namāz*) are said to represent the ascent of the mystic wayfarer to the realm of divine ordainment (*'ālam-i jabarūt*) and to the site of the unveiling of the divine Attributes through perfect attention to God.

*Mir'āt-i 'Ushshāq, in TAT p.233; cf. in SSE3 p.80*

Prayers (*namāz*) may signify any of the following; the presence (*ḥuẓūr*) of God, direct encounter and converse with God, continuous presence without absence (*ghaybat*), the station of mystery and attainment, compliance with and worship of the Beloved, or finding the Sought One.

*Bākharzī, Awrād al-Aḥbāb wa Fuṣūṣ al-Ādāb, AAF2 p.247; cf. in SSE3 pp.80–81*

Bāyazīd (Abū Yazīd al-Biṣṭāmī) confirms that external prayer will not take a devotee to God:

Bāyazīd once saw someone in a mosque praying, and said to him, “If you think that prayers (*namāz*) will bring you to God, you are wrong. This is a product of your imagination and will not lead to attainment of union with God.”

*Abū Yazīd al-Biṣṭāmī, in Tadhkirat al-Awliyā' I, TAN1 p.153, in SSE3 p.81*

It is through the grace of God, he adds, that spiritual uplift is attained:

Bāyazīd said, “In my prayers (*namāz*), I have never seen anything but my body’s action, nor achieved anything from fasting but hunger in my belly. Whatever I have achieved has been through God’s grace, not through anything that I have done.”

*Abū Yazīd al-Bisṭāmī, in Tadhkirat al-Awliyā’ I, TANİ p.155; cf. in SSE3 p.81*

Rūmī, on the other hand, uses *namāz* in a generic sense to mean both outer prayer and mystic prayer or the inner ascent of the soul. In one of his letters, he compares the *faqīh* (a scholar of Islamic religious law) and the *faqīr* (mystic). It is the mystic, he insists, who knows the true meaning of prayer:

The *faqīh* knows the form of prayer (*namāz*); its beginning is *takbīr* (“God is great”), its end *salām*. The *faqīr* knows the soul of ritual prayer (*namāz*). The condition of the soul of prayer (*namāz*) is to be forty years in the greatest *jihād* (holy war), to make one’s eyes and soul bleed (in spiritual endeavour), to transgress the veil of darkness, to die to one’s own existence, to be alive through God’s life, to exist through God’s existence.

*Rūmī, Letters 19, MMJR p.84, in TSR p.366*

Rūmī also tells the story of Daqūqī, the “night traveller” who “sped into the spiritual empire” – the “night travellers” being the mystics who spend their nights in meditation, in the spiritual worlds. “He walked on earth as the moon in heaven: by him the spirits of the night travellers became illuminated.” He would never stay longer than two days in one place for fear that he would become attached to it. “During the day he was engaged in travel, during the night in ritual prayer (*namāz*): his eye open on the divine King, and he himself like the falcon (on the king’s wrist).”<sup>6</sup> Here, the “ritual prayer” is clearly meditation that takes the soul, symbolized by the “falcon”, into the higher worlds.

Like his Middle Eastern counterparts, the fifteenth-century Indian mystic Kabīr, born to Muslim parents and teaching in the Hindu centre of Vārāṇasī, had little time for any form of outward worship, Muslim (“Turks”) or Hindu. The real prayer, he said, is inner communion with the mystic Name of God. In a poem in which he mentions various aspects of traditional Muslim worship, he writes:

Pure and supreme is my *Allāh*;  
Hindus and Turks have both failed  
even to reach His vicinity.  
Pure and supreme is my Lord.

I undertake no fasts,  
nor observe the canons of the month of *Ramaḍān*;

I only repeat the Name of the One  
who is the Ultimate.

I will not indulge in worship  
nor engage myself in *namāz*,  
for I bow to the formless One  
within my own heart.

Pure and supreme is my lord.  
I will not journey to the holy *Ka'bah*  
nor will I visit pilgrimage places;  
I have recognized the One  
within my own self –  
Why need I run after others?

Pure and supreme is my Lord.  
Says Kabīr, all my delusion has vanished;  
I am absorbed in the One, pure and supreme.  
Hindus have failed, and so have the Turks,  
even to reach His vicinity;  
Pure and supreme is my *Allāh*.

*Kabīr, Granthāvalī, Pad 338, KG p.152; cf. KWGN pp.366–67*

See also: **du'ā', riḍā' (►4), ṣalāh.**

1. See also *Qur'ān* 2:43, 4:103, 11:114, 17:78, 20:130, *passim*.
2. *Qur'ān* 17:1.
3. *Qur'ān* 53:9.
4. E.g. *Ḥadīth Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* 5:58.227, *HSB*.
5. Hujwīrī, *Kashf al-Maḥjūb* XIX, *KMM* p.388, *KM* pp.301–2.
6. Rūmī, *Maṣnavī* III:1923–30, *MJR4* pp.107–8.

**nāqūs** (A/P) *Lit.* a wooden gong or bell, a thin oblong piece of wood, which is beaten with a flexible rod known as a *wabīl*; used by Christians in Muslim countries to summon the faithful to prayer; a hand bell used in the Coptic church; still used, at least in the mid-nineteenth century, in some Greek monasteries, where it was called the *simandro* or *sēmantron*, and where it was seen by Curzon in 1833 and illustrated in his *Visits to the Monasteries of the Levant*. According to Islamic tradition, the companions of Muḥammad suggested a *nāqūs* or lighted fire as the Muslim call to prayer, but Muḥammad eventually decided on the *adhān* (the verbal call to prayer).<sup>1</sup>

In Sufi symbolism, the *nāqūs* symbolizes various aspects of inner purification:

The wooden gong (*nāqūs*) signifies the realization which leads to repentance, contrition, and spiritual practice. It also connotes the attraction that leads to awareness of God, liberates one from the *naḥs*, calls one to worship and contentment with one's state, and wakes one from the sleep of heedlessness.

*Tahānawī, Kashshāf Iṣṭilāḥāt al-Funūn, KIFT4 p.225; cf. in SSE3 p.241*

Wine symbolizes divine love, and the harp and flute signify the divine Music. Hence, Sa'dī writes:

Let all ascetics know that Sa'dī has repented of asceticism.  
I do not dread wine, the harp and flute,  
and the wooden gong (*nāqūs*), as much as I do false piety.

*Sa'dī, Badāyī' 176:8–9, KSSS p.388, BOS p.193*

1. See T.P. Hughes, "nāqūs," *DOI* p.430.

**naṣṣ** (A/P) *Lit.* demonstration; appointment, designation; a clear and unambiguous direction; in Islamic religious law (*fiqh*), a statute derived directly from an unequivocal statement in the *Qur'ān* or *ḥadīth*; regarded as superior to *qiyās* (analogical deduction), which is only permissible where there is no specific *naṣṣ*; hence, a text or verse from the *Qur'ān* or *ḥadīth* containing such a statute; also, the appointment of a successor.

Dispute over the true successor to Muḥammad seems to have begun as soon as the Prophet died. The *Shī'ahs* maintained that Muḥammad's successor (the Caliph) could not be appointed by an election in the manner of their tribal chiefs, since his functions were primarily spiritual. For them, the statements said to have been made by Muḥammad at Ghadīr al-Khumm constituted his appointment (*naṣṣ*) of 'Alī. In fact, an early name given to the *Shī'ahs* was *ahl al-naṣṣ wa al-ta'yīn* (people of designation and appointment).

See also: **fiqh**, **qiyās** (8.1).

**nāstika** (S) *Lit.* a nonbeliever in the existence (of something); unorthodox, heterodox; one who does not believe in the existence of God, the soul, and so on. See **āstika**.

**national protection Buddhism, state protection Buddhism** (C. *hùguó Fójiào*, J. *gokoku Bukkyō*, K. *hoguk Pulgyo*) Names widely used in East Asian Buddhism, especially China, Japan and Korea, for the belief that religious practices and rituals are able to invoke spiritual power in the form of *buddhas*, *bodhisattvas* and guardian deities to protect the interests of the nation and its rulers. As a result of this belief, esoteric Buddhism in China, Korea and Japan has, at various stages in its history, received significant support and funding from the ruling governments or dynasties to stage elaborate rituals and ceremonies in the belief that they would help ward off invasion and insurrection, prevent plagues, heal disease, end droughts, avert natural or military disasters, and generally bolster the standing of the ruling elite. As a result of the collaboration between Buddhism and the state, the two often became closely intertwined, with considerable wealth and power being given to the Buddhist *sangha* and its leaders, with inevitable and consequent corruption.

Justification of the belief is found in three popular Chinese *sūtras* – the *Lotus Sūtra*, the *Suvarṇaprabhāsa Sūtra* ('Golden Light *Sūtra*'), and the *Rénwáng jīng* ('Scripture for Humane Kings'). Among other promises of protection, the *Lotus Sūtra* maintains that simply remembering the name of the *bodhisattva* Avalokiteshvara will invoke his help. Avalokiteshvara is the *bodhisattva* of compassion, who is believed to have taken a vow to remain in *samsāra* (realm of transmigration) in order to answer the cries of suffering; hence his name, which means 'Perceiver of the World's Sounds'. Among other examples, the *Lotus Sūtra* maintains, in the name of the Buddha:

Suppose there are immeasurable hundreds, thousands, ten thousands, millions of living beings who are undergoing various trials and suffering. If they hear of this *bodhisattva*, Perceiver of the World's Sounds, and single-mindedly call his name, then at once he will perceive the sound of their voices, and they will all gain deliverance from their trials.

If someone, holding fast to the name of Bodhisattva Perceiver of the World's Sounds (Avalokiteshvara), should enter a great fire, the fire could not burn him. This would come about because of this *bodhisattva*'s authority and supernatural power. If one were washed away by a great flood and called upon his name, one would immediately find oneself in a shallow place....

Suppose there were a hundred, a thousand, ten thousand, a million living beings who, seeking for gold, silver, lapis lazuli, seashell, agate, coral, amber, pearls and other treasures, set out on the great sea; and suppose a fierce wind should blow their ship off course and it drifted to the land of *rākshasa* demons. If among those people there is even just one who calls the name of Bodhisattva Perceiver of the

World's Sounds, then all those people will be delivered from their troubles with the *rākshasas*. This is why he is called Perceiver of the World's Sounds.

If a person who faces imminent threat of attack should call the name of Bodhisattva Perceiver of the World's Sounds, then the swords and staves wielded by his attackers would instantly shatter into so many pieces and he would be delivered.

*Lotus Sūtra 25, T9 262:56c5–17, LSOC pp.339–40*

In another section of the *Lotus Sūtra*, the Buddha tells a group of “daughters of *rākshasa* demons, along with Mother of Demon Children, her offspring, and her attendants,” who “wish to shield and guard those who read, recite, accept and uphold the *Lotus Sūtra* and spare them from decline or harm” that they will earn great merit by doing so. Indeed, continues the Buddha, if they earn merit for protecting those who only reverence the name of the *Lotus Sūtra*, how much more merit will they earn by protecting those who perform elaborate ceremonies and give extensive alms to the *sūtra* rolls of the *Lotus Sūtra*. The *Lotus Sūtra* is suggesting that the more elaborate the ceremonies, then the greater will be the motivation of the protecting powers:

Excellent, excellent! If you can shield and guard those who accept and uphold the mere name of the *Lotus Sūtra*, your merit will be immeasurable. How much more so if you shield and guard those who accept and uphold it in its entirety, who offer alms to the *sūtra* rolls, flowers, incense, necklaces, powdered incense, paste incense, incense for burning, banners, canopies, music, who burn various kinds of lamps, lamps of butter oil, oil lamps, lamps of various fragrant oils, lamps of *sumanā* flower oil, lamps of *champaka* flower oil, lamps of *vārshika* flower oil and lamps of *utpala* flower oil, and who in this manner offer hundreds and thousands of varieties of alms. . . . You and your attendants should shield and guard teachers of the Law (*Dharma*) such as these!

*Lotus Sūtra 26, T9 262:59b20–26, LSOC p.352*

The *Lotus Sūtra* is promising extensive help to those who believe in it. In the *Golden Light Sūtra*, the protection is specifically extended to human kings. According to the story, four celestial kings tell the Buddha that they are “world protectors”, who, “through magic power and blessings”, give help and protection to devout monks who follow the *Golden Light Sūtra*, even if their land is “overrun by foreign armies, afflicted with famine and disease, and acutely oppressed by hundreds of different harms, thousands of harms and hundreds of thousands of harms.” The four celestial kings then go on to



speak of the protection they give to human kings who follow the *sūtra* and who provide the lay and monastic community with all the support they need. If a human king having heard the *sūtra* should go on to

give protection, give refuge, care for and save those monks from all their enemies, then . . . we, the four great kings, will protect, give refuge, care for, save and give peace and well-being to the beings living in the entire country of that king of humans.

*Golden Light Sūtra 7, T16, 663:341a14, KGGL p.32*

Furthermore, if a human king should provide the monks and laity with “conducive resources”, and “respects, honours, and offers service” to them, then the four celestial kings will offer the same care and protection to the human king. The Buddha then praises the four kings, endorses what they are doing, and concludes:

O you four great kings! Do guard, give refuge, guide, care for, avert retribution and ensure the peace and happiness of the kings of humans who venerate and honour this king of glorious *sūtras*, the *Sublime Golden Light*. In this way, you four great kings with your armies, retinues and numerous hundreds of thousands of *yakshas* will thoroughly safeguard the *Dharma* system of past, present, and future *buddhas*. You will also preserve and retain it.

*Golden Light Sūtra 7, T16, 663:341a27–b12, KGGL p.33*

The *Rénwáng jīng* likewise encourages kings to endorse Buddhism and to support its followers. It instructs them that “when the state is thrown into chaos, facing all sorts of disasters and being destroyed by invading enemies”, they should arrange a large hall with a hundred images of *buddhas* and *bodhi-sattvas*, and a hundred seats. A hundred eminent monks should then be invited to come and teach the *Rénwáng jīng*. It was believed that this ceremony, the ‘Humane Kings Assembly of One-Hundred Seats (C. *Rénwáng bǎi gāozuò dào-chǎng*; J. *Ninnō hyakukōzai*; K. *Inwang paekkojwa hoe*)’, which was held in China, Japan and Korea from the late sixth century (CE), would avert any disaster facing the nation.<sup>1</sup>

1. See “huguo Fojiao,” *Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*, PDB.

**niànjīng** (C) *Lit.* to read aloud (*niàn*) scriptures (*jīng*); to recite or chant Daoist or Buddhist scriptures. See **sòng**.

**niggun, neginah** (He) (pl. *niggunim*) *Lit.* melody; generally a wordless melody sung by the *hasidim* (pietists) of various rabbinical lineages to induce a state of spiritual awareness. The *hasidim* conceive the entire creation to be in a state of exile until its redemption through devotion. They believe that the melody has its source in the spiritual realm and is redeemed when expressed in worship by the *hasid*. Particular *niggunim* are associated with specific Hasidic *rebbs* (masters) and were considered holy, such as the *niggun* of the Ba'al Shem Tov or the *niggun* of Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Lyady (1745–1812).

Reb Zalman Schachter-Shalomi, a contemporary spiritual teacher, writes about the *niggun* and its use. When sung with fervour and sincerity, it has the power to unlock the doors of divine forgiveness because it is akin to true repentance:

*A niggun is a wordless prayer, a melody that a hasid sings to get closer to God. In the Old Country, if a hazan (cantor) was too much in love with the sound of his own voice, they would say, "That hazan is a fool. He frequents the palace of neginah (melody, niggun), which is right next door to the palace of teshuvah (repentance, return to God) – and yet he never goes in!" At Habad we had a saying: "Every locksmith has a master key with which he can open many doors. Neginah is such a key, for it can unlock all doors." Why? Because a niggun sung in the proper way is like doing teshuvah, like a moment of true repentance and turning to God. The wellsprings of niggun and teshuvah are the simple yearnings of the heart that we all share.*

*Zalman Schachter-Shalomi, Davening, DJPS p.29*

Reb Zalman believes the *niggunim* to be an echo of the soul's own rhythm and melody – a sound of the Divine within:

*Niggunim are not just the tunes we Jews sing, a soundtrack to the Jewish movie. They are inalienable to the Jewish spirit, expressions of the God-song that we already carry within us. These melodies trigger an almost molecular memory for me. My parents sang them. So did my grandparents, my great-grandparents – all my Ashkenazic (Germanic) ancestors. Kol dodi dofek, says a famous verse from the Song of Songs: "The voice of my Beloved comes knocking."<sup>1</sup> But, as Reb Nahman of Bratslav points out, the word dofek (knocks) also means pulse. The voice of the Beloved is always there, pulsing and rhythming under the surface.*

*Zalman Schachter-Shalomi, Davening, DJPS p.31*

Reb Zalman describes how the *niggun* is interwoven intrinsically with the Hasidic way of life, particularly the role it plays in the *Habad* environment, the lineage with which he is associated:

The Hasidic way of life is almost impossible to imagine without *niggunim*. Typical to Hasidic communities, for example, are *tisch niggunim*, tunes sung at the Rebbe's table. These have many different moods, depending on the occasion. Some, particularly on *Shabbos* (Yiddish, Sabbath) and holidays, are *zemirot*, poems written throughout the ages. These are matched to different melodies: this one will have a Russian flavour, that one more of a Hungarian feel, a third one a Sephardic melody. Friday night *zemirot* are generally *freilach* (happy) songs – a lot of waltzes and some great table-bangers. *Shabbos* morning is a little more calm. Finally, at *se'udah shelishit*, the 'third meal' late on *Shabbos* afternoon, we would go slow, singing those *ga'agu'im niggunim*, the *niggunim* of longing for a *yom she-kulo Shabbos*, a day devoted entirely to peace and rest. Much yearning comes out in these songs, which are very beautiful, special melodies.

*Zalman Schachter-Shalomi, Davening, DJPS p.43*

He also speaks of the spiritual, meditative nature of some *niggunim*:

Now, the majority of *Habad niggunim* have no words. *Habad* believe that *niggunim* transport us to places words cannot – that, if anything, words limit the *niggun*'s power to induce *devekut* (attachment to God). Most of the Hasidic *niggunim* were prayers in sound. The contemplative *hitbonenut* (meditation) *niggunim*, especially, are sung to immerse us ever deeper in the world of spirit and so have no words.

*Zalman Schachter-Shalomi, Davening, DJPS pp.49–50*

A *niggun*, he maintains, is a path to God:

We are not merely singing melodies – this is the point. A *niggun* is a path to God, a 'song of ascension'. But we must set out along that path! We must travel with that intention in mind.

*Zalman Schachter-Shalomi, Davening, DJPS p.57*

#### 1. *Song of Songs* 5:2.

**nisīhi** (Pk) *Lit.* it is abandoned; uttered by monks and laity three times upon entering the main door of a Jain temple as a statement of intent to abandon the material world in body, speech, and mind; repeated once again upon entry to the inner sanctum (*gabhāra*) of the temple that houses the image of the *Tīrthankara*, signifying the completion of temple activities; again repeated after completing outer worship (*dravya pūjā*, actual worship) of the image of the *Tīrthankara*, and before beginning inner worship (*bhāva pūjā*, mental

worship). On leaving the temple, the individual says *avasīhi* (it is re-entered), indicating re-entry to the world.

See also: **pūjā**.

**nīyah** (A), **nīyat** (P) *Lit.* intention, resolve, assertion, purpose; commonly (but not always), a good or sincere resolve or intention. In orthodox Islamic prayer (*namāz*, *ṣalāh*), for instance, the Muslim begins with a *nīyah*, an inaudible assertion of the intention to recite a certain number of *raka'āt* (rounds of the prayer). It is intended as a reorientation or turning of the mind towards God – a personal statement of the intention to pray. Once the *nīyah* has been repeated, the prayers must be completed as intended without interruption or distraction, else they are considered null.

Rūmī points out that strict adherence to such ritualistic practices leads to rigidity and fault-finding, taking the seeker away from God:

Four Indians went into a mosque:  
 They bowed their heads and prostrated themselves for worship's sake.  
 Following a *nīyat*, each one performed the *takbīr* ("God is great"),  
 and began to pray with lowliness and contrition.  
 When the *muezzin* arrived, from one of them fell the remark,  
 "O *muezzin*, have you given the call to prayers? Is it time?"  
 The second Indian said on the spur of the moment,  
 "Hey, you have spoken, and so your prayer is null."  
 The third one said to the second,  
 "O uncle, why do you rail at him?  
 Tell yourself how to behave."  
 Said the fourth, "Praise be to God that I have not fallen  
 into the pit of error like the other three."  
 Hence, the prayers of all the four were marred,  
 and the fault-finders went astray  
 more than he who had made the original mistake.

O happy the soul that saw its own fault,  
 and if anyone found fault, eagerly accepted it!  
 Because half of every man  
 has always belonged to the realm of faults,  
 and the other half to the realm of the Unseen.

*Rūmī, Maṣnavī II:3027–35; cf. MJR2 pp.378–79*

*Nīyah* indicates a general truth: that no devotional or mystical practice will succeed without a firm resolve, a clear intention, and the willpower to remain

focused. A number of Sufis have consequently spoken of spiritual resolve. Al-Ghazālī writes that spiritual practice without firm resolve leads nowhere:

The devotees of repute undertake no activity without a purpose, because they know that sincere intention (*nīyah*) is the soul of spiritual practice, and no act is worthy without true intention (*nīyah*) behind it.

An act done for the sake of pretension or show leads away from God, and is the cause of His wrath rather than His pleasure. Resolve (*nīyah*) is no mere statement by word of mouth. It appears by God's grace when internal cravings are calmed. For the individual whose heart is immersed in spirituality, grace in the form of intent comes often, but not to the man immersed in worldly thoughts.

*Al-Ghazālī, Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn 4:7, IUDG4 p.494; cf. RRS pp.319–20*

Success on the spiritual path is not possible without gaining knowledge (*'ilm*) and carrying on spiritual practice (*'amal*). Practice without a purpose (*nīyah*) is futile toil; intent (*nīyah*) without sincerity (*ikhhlās*) is hypocrisy; and sincerity without truthfulness (*ṣidq*) and after investigation is a delusion.

*Al-Ghazālī, Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn 4:7, IUDG4 p.477; cf. RRS p.317*

Other Sufis have also pointed out that intention arises in the mind, and needs to be expressed in action before there can be any positive outcome:

Intention (*nīyah*) is a resolve born of gnosis, possessing the power to stimulate action. It has three levels: (1) the pure, which stirs one to desire nothing but encounter with God; (2) the turbid, which causes one to be hypocritical, seeking rank and the world; (3) the mixed, which has many levels: "For all, there are degrees according to their deeds."<sup>1</sup>

*Tahānawī, Kashshāf Iṣṭilāḥāt al-Funūn, KIFT4 p.273; cf. in SSE9 p.17*

Some maintain that intention (*nīyah*) means the resolve to act, while others hold that it means thinking about the sort of action that one may undertake. Junayd said, "Intention (*nīyah*) is the conceptualization of actions." Another has said, "The believer's intention (*nīyah*) is God."

*Abū Naṣr al-Sarrāj, Luma' fī al-Taṣawwuf, KLTA p.231, in SSE9 p.17*

Rūmī says that intentions are like the foam on the sea: they are not union with the divine Sea itself:

How long will you watch the revolutions of the water wheel?  
Look, and behold the rapid water turning it.

You will say, “I am beholding it”:  
 but there are many excellent signs of really beholding it.  
 You have taken a superficial view  
 of the circling movement of the foam (*i.e.* phenomena).  
 Look upon the (divine) Sea if you want (divine) bewilderment.

He that sees the foam, speaks of the mystery:  
 he that sees the Sea is beyond speech.  
 He that sees the foam forms intentions (*nīyat*):  
 he that sees the Sea makes his heart one with the Sea.  
 He that sees the foam is engaged in reckoning:  
 he that sees the Sea is without (personal) volition.  
 He that sees the foam is in constant movement (in this world):  
 he that sees the Sea is devoid of hypocrisy.

*Rūmī, Maṣnavī V:2905–11; cf. MJR6 p.175*

See also: **namāz**.

1. *Qur’ān* 6:132.

**noa** (Mo) *Lit.* ordinary, common, unrestricted; free from the restrictions of *tapu* (sacred, restricted); the converse of *tapu*; hence, *whakanoa* (to make common, to remove *tapu*). The same word with a corresponding meaning is present in the Hawaiian language.

The New Zealand doctor and scholar Edward Shortland (1812–1893) summarizes:

Everything not included under the class *tapu* was called *noa*, meaning free or common. Things and persons *tapu* could, however, be made *noa* by means of certain ceremonies, the object of which was to extract the *tapu* essence, and restore it to the source whence it originally came.

*Edward Shortland, Maori Religion and Mythology, MRMS p.26*

Samuel Timoti Robinson of the Kāi Tahu, the principal tribe of New Zealand’s South Island, provides more detail:

*Noa* is the opposite of *tapu*; the word basically means ‘common’. *Noa* implies that the situation is ‘free’ from restriction and the place is ‘common ground’.

When there is *noa* there is freedom and the restrictions are removed from the people. Here the *tapu* or restrictions have been lifted by a method called *whakanoa* (make common). Women have a greater

ability than men to *whakanoa*. Their *mana* is different than men's and so certain women with the right *tapu* are able to move freely, even over *tapu* places. Some situations are made *noa* simply by having a woman present.

Some *noa* are positive and some *noa* are negative. Positive *noa*, for instance, is when the *tapu* is lifted in the *pōwhiri* welcoming ceremony. Here, there was *tapu* or restriction between the visitors and host. Indeed we do not say certain things to strangers as we might do to friends lest we offend them. At this stage, when the two parties first meet, it may eventuate that these strangers are actually enemies, resulting in war or a more positive outcome of peace. In the *pōwhiri* ceremony the *tapu* is lifted between each party after they join and eat together. When the host and visitors share a feast the situation is made *noa*, and they may sit together as friends.

Negative *noa*, on the other hand, may occur when there has been a *hara* or infringement of *tapu*. Here the *tapu* has been made *noa* because its *mana* has been debased and broken such as when someone is made a slave. Their *tapu* no longer exists because their *mana* or personal power has been reduced. That person now relies upon their master for further survival and has become *noa* or common.

*Hara* were sometimes committed purposefully by Māori to induce negative *noa*. The *tapu* was broken in an enemy when a cabbage leaf was slapped upon their head and eaten as if to treat them as relish for food. A similar rite was performed over a dead human body to make the *tapu* of the person *noa* before the body was cooked in an earth oven and eaten.

Sometimes when a *hara* has been committed, it does not result in negative *noa*, but instead the *tapu* backfires upon the offending person because its *tapu* is higher than that of the trespasser. And so the *tohunga* saw that some *tapu* were harmful to people because of the *mana* or power behind them. When a tree had been wrongly cut down it became *tapu* and the *mana* of it was harmful to those in the area. Where a person had died, say upon a certain rock bed, the site became *tapu*. The *tohunga* is required to *whakanoa* or 'make *noa*' by a *tapu*-lifting ceremony. Here it is the role of the *tohunga* to mediate between *tapu* and *noa*.

Some *tapu* were placed by the *tohunga* for conservational reasons, and so when the right time came the *tapu* was lifted and made *noa*. This is positive *tapu* and positive *noa*. Other *tapu* were negative like those that cause harm and were made *noa* releasing the energy to *Rangi* ('Sky Father'), the source of all *tapu*. The role of the *tohunga* was to deal with *tapu* for the people and to know when and how to deal with it.

Cooking and eating food, as in the *pōwhiri* ceremony, was a common method of lifting *tapu*. Other means were also employed for making something *tapu*, such as the chanting of *karakia* (incantations). Sometimes an item was made *tapu* for a particular purpose, and subsequently made *noa* after the purpose had been accomplished, as the New Zealand ethnographer Elsdon Best (1856–1931) reports:

Travellers sometimes went to a priest and obtained from him a *mauri* (image, talisman) for the period of the journey to be made. In that talismanic object would be located the *mana* of the particular *atua* or god in whose care the traveller placed himself. When he returned from his journey, he would hand the *mauri* back to the priest, who would make it *noa* (common) by banishing its virtue – that is, by disassociating from it the *mana* of the protecting deity.

*Elsdon Best, Spiritual and Mental Concepts of the Maori, SMMB p.29*

See also: **tapu**.

**nushūr** (A) *Lit.* resurrection; an uncommon (*ghayr ma'lūf*) term, used twice in the *Qur'ān*, both times in a context emphasizing the cherishing, caretaking aspect of *Allāh (Rabb)* more than his wrathful, punishing aspect. That is, while the Day of Judgment is usually portrayed as a fearful time of punishments, the term *nushūr* connotes resurrection as a sweet gift from God:

It is He who makes the night a robe for you,  
and sleep as repose,  
and makes the day a resurrection (*nushūr*).

*Qur'ān 25:47*

It is He who has made the earth manageable for you:  
so traverse its tracts and enjoy the sustenance that He furnishes:  
But unto Him is the resurrection (*nushūr*).

*Qur'ān 67:15*

See also: **resurrection (in Islam)**.

**oli** (Hw) *Lit.* a chant, specifically without dancing (*oli*), especially with extended phrases chanted in one breath, often with a trill at the end of each phrase. See **hula**.



**Olī** (Pk) From the Sanskrit *Avalī*; a nine-day *Shvetāmbara* Jain festival devoted to worship of the *siddha-chakra*, held twice-yearly from the seventh to the fifteenth (full-moon) days of the bright half of the months of *Chaitra* (March/April) and *Āshwin* (September/October), during which time the *āyambil* diet of plain and tasteless boiled food is adopted; also called *Navapada Olī*. The *Olī tapa* (austerity) is observed nine times, over a period of either nine or four and a half years, depending upon whether the practitioner performs it once or twice a year.

The *siddha-chakra* (S. wheel of perfection) is a nine-sectored *yantra* (symbolic drawing) or *maṇḍala* representing the five *parameshṭhins* (S. great beings) who are deemed worthy of worship, together with the four factors considered as essential on the path to liberation (*moksha*). The five *parameshṭhins* are invoked in the Jain *namaskāra mantra*, an ancient Prakrit sacred formula used as a prayer of homage, obeisance, and salutation. They are the *arhats* (Pk. *arihantas* or *arahantas*, enlightened ones), *Tīrthankaras*, *siddhas* (disembodied, perfected, liberated ones), *āchāryas* (mendicant leaders), *upādhyāyas* (preceptors), and *sādhus* (ordinary mendicants). The four essential factors are *samyag-tapas* (right austerity, right self-discipline), which is the correct practice of asceticism, together with the three fundamentals or three gems (*ratna-traya*) of the Jain faith, which are *samyag-darshana* (right faith), *samyag-jñāna* (right knowledge), and *samyag-chāritra* (right conduct).

*Navapada* means ‘nine stations’ or ‘nine petals’, and the *siddha-chakra yantra* or *maṇḍala* is often in the shape of a lotus. In the middle of the lotus is the word ‘*arihanta*’ or an image representing the *arahantas*. Eight symmetrically arranged petals surrounding this figure represent the *siddhas* (north), the *āchāryas* (east), the *upādhyāyas* (south), the *sādhus* (west), with the four essential factors occupying the intermediate directions of the compass. Sometimes, the *siddha-chakra yantra* is arranged more simply as a circle divided by eight radii on a wooden table or silver plate. Each petal of the lotus or sector of the circle, together with the central area, contains a word or image representing the nine ‘stations’ or *navapada*. Some *siddha-chakra yantras* are simple, some are ornate arrangements, perhaps on a marble base with carved statuettes of the five *parameshṭhins* in crystal or marble. During the course of the festival, Jain mendicants deliver discourses on the symbolism relating to each petal or sector of the *yantra*.

The *Olī* festival consists of worship (*pūjā*) performed to all the names collectively and to each specifically, with particular ceremonies and offerings performed on each of the nine days. Those observing the festival adopt the *āyambil* diet, which consists of boiled rice, cereals and pulses, or a gruel made thereof, prepared without the use of oil, spices, ghee, sugar, salt, curds, or any fresh or dried fruit or vegetables. Each of the nine ‘stations’ is accorded a colour, which is reflected in the colour of the grain or pulse consumed on that day. Of these, white (rice) symbolizes the *arihanta*, red (wheat) is for the

*siddha*, yellow (yellow gram) for *āchārya*, green (mung bean) for *upādhyāya*, black (*urad dāl*, black gram) for *sādhu*, and white (rice) for the four essential factors. Sometimes, other pulses or grains are used for the different colours, as appropriate. On the last day of *Olī*, the final *pūjā* is performed before the *siddha-chakra yantra*, with much singing and offerings, including *pakhāl*, which consists of water, milk, saffron, and ghee.

The festival is associated with the story of King Shrīpāl and his wife Mayaṇāsundarī, who is said to have cured her husband's leprosy by means of her austerities. As a result of this association, the festival is often observed by women in the belief that it ensures their husbands' health.

See also: **āyambil**.

**paho** (Hopi) *Lit.* a Hopi prayerstick; one of the commonest forms of prayer offering, made from one or two wooden sticks or hollow reeds, of varying lengths, to which feathers, thread, sprigs of herbs, or other objects may be attached; can be simple or elaborately carved, painted or (in the case of hollow reeds) filled with various items, the elaborations being specific to the god to whom they are offered and the purpose for which they are intended; created in an atmosphere of prayer and concentration, often in a *kiva* (religious building); intended to convey prayers to the god, with the sun acting as the conveyor of the spirit of the *paho* to the gods. The Hopis, who nowadays live on a reservation in northeastern Arizona, are Pueblo Indians of the southwestern states of North America.

*Pahos* are made for a variety of purposes, maybe as prayers for blessings and success before the sowing of crops, building a house, setting out on a hunt, or going on an expedition for salt. *Pahos* are taken to a shrine where they are lodged in rock fissures or hung from a bush in order to absorb the vibrations of the prayers that are subsequently offered. *Pahos* are also made on the day before a *kachina* dance. *Kachinas* are the spirits of material things – the sun, moon, stars, wind, thunder, corn, insects, and so on. They are not worshipped, but it is believed that if venerated and respected they can help human beings. In Hopi understanding, everything – animate or inanimate – has a spirit, or to put it in more general terms, there is a sacred life force in everything, and it is essential for human well-being and survival to be aware of it and to be in tune with it.

*Pahos* are similar in function to prayer feathers, which may be a long plume or a shorter downy feather, generally attached to a thread. Prayer feathers are associated with clouds, which are generally considered by Pueblo Indians to be a category of spirits known as 'cloud beings' and regarded as the spirits of the dead. Being light like clouds, feathers are used as offerings to these spirits,

who – if properly propitiated by prayer and food offerings – are believed to bring rain. The spirits do not consume the food, but are believed to absorb its essence, leaving the substance for those who venerate them.<sup>1</sup>

Hopi hunter-gatherers would always prepare *pahos* for the particular kind of creatures they were hunting or for the plants they were seeking. Understanding that all life is sacred, they would pray for forgiveness from the animal or plant for taking its life, explaining that it was only their necessity that caused them to ask the creature to make this sacrifice.

The American painter and writer Thomas Mails (1920–2001), who developed a long-term association with Native North American traditions, explains the nature and purpose of *pahos*:

The *paho* (is) the most common form of a prayer offering. It is inseparably connected with all religious ceremonies and prayers. It is, in fact, a prayer in itself, and it makes the spoken prayer associated with it effective. *Pahos* are manufactured in several forms. One form consists of two sticks, often painted green with black tips and tied together with cotton string cut to a prescribed length. The colour green represents a mossy place and moisture. One of the sticks is male, the other female. As a rule, only the female is given a face, consisting of two dots for eyes and one for a mouth. A small cornhusk – shaped like a funnel and holding a little cornmeal, grass seeds, pollen, and honey – is attached to a pair of sticks where they are joined together by the tie string. These represent a prayer for a plentiful harvest. Added to the husk is a short, four-strand cotton string, on the end of which are tied two small feathers. At the butt end of the sticks are tied a turkey wing feather and a sprig of each of two specified herbs.

Other forms of *pahos* are made of flat pieces of board ranging from one to three feet in length and two inches or more in width, to which feathers and herbs are attached. Painted on the boards are symbolic figures of *kachinas*, natural objects, animals, and reptiles.

*Pahos* used on altars are numerous, and they vary considerably in design. Some are long, thin sticks with cotton strings and feathers attached near the ends. Others are thicker sticks with a profusion of feathers tied on at their centre. One type is bent over a cane or crook shape. Others are just straight rods. Some are long willow switches to the tips of which the feathers of the eagle, hawk, turkey, flicker, and other birds are tied.

All *pahos* have meanings that are understood by the society members, and they are employed accordingly. For example, a cane shape is usually a prayer to a very old person who has died and gone to the Underworld, but who, by the stick's presence, is now called back to

share in the ceremony and to assist in the fulfilment of its purpose. All *pahos* are made with great care and solemnity, and they are prayed over each time they are used. There are specific ceremonies for making *pahos*. The *kiva* leaders meet to fashion them, and they always perform prescribed acts before the actual construction of the *pahos* begins.

*Thomas Mails, Secret Native American Pathways, SNPM pp.91–92*

The design and adornment of the *pahos* is defined by its intended purpose, which is itself determined by the spirit or “chief” to whom the *paho* is directed:

There is a theory behind the making of prayersticks and prayer feathers: “A man makes a prayerstick because he wants something good, some benefit from Cloud, the Cardinal Point Chiefs, the Ice Chief or Planting One. From these and other chiefs all benefits proceed. A man makes a prayerstick exactly as prescribed because the wise old men of the ancient times said it should be made so. Feathers are used on prayersticks, as well as prayer feathers, because they are light in weight and because Cloud and all the other chiefs desire them to make *ka’lamoñwū* (the prayer feathers hanging in front of the forehead).”<sup>2</sup>

The Hopi barter his prayersticks and prayer feathers with the chiefs for material or other benefits, and he places on his prayerstick the prescribed feather and grass emblems that are related to the kind of benefits he desires. Feathers of the yellow bird, warbler, bluebird, turkey, eagle, hawk, duck, and owl are used. If a Hopi desires rain, he ties on a yellow bird or duck feather. A turkey feather is tied to every prayerstick. For the hot weather needed to make a good peach harvest, owl and yellow bird feathers are used. For hunting, the feathers of the turkey and the yellow bird are attached, and also some of the grass that deer and antelope prefer. The feather of a bluebird is a prayer for snow and ice.

The father of a young boy makes him a *paho* to which is tied the primary wing feather of the hummingbird. He places the free end of the string of this prayer feather against the base of a shrine (the feather points toward the sunrise) and prays for swiftness and endurance, so that his son’s movements may be like those of the hummingbird – swift and tireless.

*Thomas Mails, Secret Native American Pathways, SNPM pp.92–93*

Once made and left in appropriate places, the Sun conveys their prayerful essence to their intended destinations:

No *paho* is to be touched for four days after it is placed. To do so will bring terrible harm to the offender. Even after that it is to be touched

only with the left hand, for the left hand is on the heart side of the body, and it does not grab as the right hand does. Also, it is cleaner, for it does not touch the mouth during the eating of food, and does not clean the body after waste is released. In healing, the Hopi medicine man always uses the left hand.

As Sun journeys across the sky each day, he sees the prayersticks and prayer feathers and comes to them, inhales their essence, and then takes their breath body or spiritual likeness with him. He places each prayer in his belt and carries it with him as he goes in at the west to the underworld at the end of the day. There he gives away all he has collected to *Muingwu*, who knows all prayersticks and prayer feathers. As *Muingwu* takes them up one by one and looks at each, he says to the other chiefs, “This is for you, or you,” according to the way the prayersticks are designed. Those that are poorly made, or made by thoughtless men or men of evil hearts, he casts away, saying, “This is from an evil man, or a foolish one.” The chiefs thank *Muingwu* and the makers of the emblems. They decorate their foreheads with the feathers and then send along the benefits that the prayer-maker desires.

*Thomas Mails, Secret Native American Pathways, SNPM p.93*

See also: **prayersticks**.

1. See Barton Wright, *Pueblo Cultures, PCBW* pp.16–17.
2. Alexander Stephen, *Hopi Journal, HJS2* pp.1271.

**pài** (C) *Lit.* a sect, school, or religious or spiritual lineage in Daoism or Chinese Buddhism; also seen in compound words, such as *fǎpài* (teaching school) and *zōngpài* (sect).

**pàishī** (C) *Lit.* lineage (*pài*) poem (*shī*); school poem; the founding poem of a religious lineage, usually (as for example with the *Lóngmén* lineage of the *Quánzhēn* school of Daoism) comprising 100 Chinese characters, handwritten by one’s teacher and transmitted during initiation or ordination. In the *Quánzhēn* school of Daoism, the master gives his disciple a Daoist or ritual name (*dàohào* or *fǎhào*) whose first character is the character in the *pàishī* (lineage poem) immediately following the first character of the teacher’s own Daoist name. If the disciple himself becomes a master, he in turn gives each of his disciples a name beginning with the next character of the *pàishī*. Monastics of the *Quánzhēn* school memorize their lineage poem so that they can challenge and authenticate anyone claiming the same lineage affiliation.

**pañchāgni, pañcha-tapas (S/H), panch agan, panj agan (Pu)** *Lit.* five (*pañcha*) fires (*agni, tapas*); five sacred or sacrificial fires; hence, *pañchāgnika, pañchāgni-sādhana* (five-fires practice) or *pañchāgni-tapas* (five-fires penance); a severe ascetic practice, performed even in the heat of the summer, in which the devotee sits surrounded by five fires, one each to the north, south, east and west, with the sun above as the fifth. It is said in the *Rāmāyaṇa* that the sage Vishvāmitra practised the *pañcha-tapas* for a thousand years, praying with uplifted arms.<sup>1</sup> Jealous of the spiritual merit being acquired by the great sage, *Indra* sent *Rambhā* to him, the most beautiful nymph in his paradise. Vishvāmitra was at first delighted but, when he saw through *Indra*'s deception, he became furious. Cursing *Rambhā*, he turned her into a block of marble, where she remained for ten thousand years. Struck by remorse for falling prey to lust and anger, Vishvāmitra returned to his austerities for several thousand more years.<sup>2</sup>

The *pañchāgni-vidyā* (five-fires doctrine), regarded as a secret of the *Kshatriya* kings, teaches that there are two ways to go after death – *devayāna* (way of the gods), which leads to *brahmaloka* and liberation of the soul, or *pitriyāna* (way of the ancestors), which leads the soul back to transmigration in this world.

The account has many symbolic and mythological elements. The *Bṛihadāranyaka* and *Chhāndogya Upanishads* relate that the soul first ascends to heaven, then descends upon the earth as rain, is then absorbed by cereals and becomes food, where it is eaten by a man and converted to semen, which, on entering a woman's womb, is born as a human being. The five fires are said to be the next world, the rain cloud, this world, man, and woman. Each of these represent *agni*, the sacrificial fire, each with its own five elements, *viz.* fuel, smoke, flame, coals and sparks, which are given different symbolic interpretations.

The soul is said to pass through these five stages, for each of which there is particular sacrifice and oblation, each with its own symbolism. After passing through the fifth sacrifice, the soul is reborn in a human body.<sup>3</sup> Those who know the secret of meditation on the five fires and “meditate with faith upon *Satya* (Truth, Reality, *i.e.* *Brahman*)”<sup>4</sup> are said to reach *brahmaloka*; others, who only practise rites and rituals, remain in the cycle of transmigration.

The five sins of theft, immorality, gambling, drinking and lying, or the five passions of lust, anger, greed, attachment and pride are also known as the *panj agan*:

The body is the furnace and the mind the iron therein:  
the five fires (*panch agan*) of passions are heating it.  
Sin is the charcoal placed thereon by which the mind is burnt,  
and anxiety becomes the tongs.

*Guru Nānak, Ādi Granth 990, AGC*

1. *Rāmāyaṇa, Bālakāṇḍa* 1:63:22–24, *RVMD* p.123.
2. *Rāmāyaṇa, Bālakāṇḍa* 1:64:5–20, *RVMD* pp.124–25.
3. *Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upanishad* 6:2.2–16; *Chhāndogya Upanishad* 5:3–9.
4. *Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upanishad* 6:2.15.

**pángmén** (C) *Lit.* side (*páng*) gate (*mén*); side doors, side roads, side tracks; wrong paths, incorrect teachings; teachings deemed incorrect or unorthodox, and unable to lead a student to union with the *Dào*.

Master Lǐ Dàochún (C13th) and many writers within the *nèidān* (inner alchemy) tradition have used the term *pángmén* to describe teachings and methods of spiritual practice that do not – according to their understanding – grant complete realization of the *Dào*. Master Liú Yīmíng (1734–1821) bemoans the proliferation of deviations and diversions from the true spiritual path to union with the *Dào*:

Alas, for those who do not understand the *Dào*, there are endless side doors (*pángmén*) and twisted diversions. Some are obsessed with emptiness (*kōng*), others are attached to appearances (*zhíxiàng*); some are engaged in the display of supernatural powers. There are seventy-two schools of alchemical practice and three thousand six hundred deviant practices. Like the blind leading the blind, they are lost, and lead students away from the true path. They hinder students and lead them into a dead end.

*Liú Yīmíng, Wùdào lù, ZW268, DS18*

And again:

The *Dào* is simple and accessible. It is in your own home, and there is no need to look further afield. Turn around (within yourself) and you will find the elixir to restore the spirit. Turn back and there is the true shore of the *Dào*. The spiritual treasure remains unrevealed to students, only because their minds are not ready. It is deplorable that ungrounded and unfulfilled people pass their entire lives vainly pursuing side tracks (*pángmén*).

*Liú Yīmíng, Wùdào lù, ZW268, DS18*

And:

The *Dào* is one, not two. However, deluded people insist on separating it into ‘above’ and ‘below’. The Great Ultimate (*tàijí*) is actually the name for complete awareness (*yuánjué*). Complete devotion (*zhìchéng*) is in itself the gold elixir (*jīndān*). Recognize that the principles of

(Daoist) saints (*shèng*) and (Buddhist) worthy ones (*xián*, S. *arhat*) are the same. Understand that Daoism and Buddhism are from the same source. Without this understanding, you will seek elsewhere; in vain will you enter side doors (*pángmén*) with deluded beliefs.

*Liú Yīmíng, Wùdào lù, ZW268, DS18*

Elsewhere, master Liú Yīmíng expresses the hope that those who are “seeking outside themselves” will abandon this diversion and turn within. He reminds them that the elixir they seek externally is already within them:

This (elixir, *i.e.* the transcendent spirit, the true self) is nothing but the original, inherent, permanent endowment of Truth. It is neither physical nor non-physical. It is only because of the entanglements of human life – which act upon the thinking spirit (*shíshén*, the thinking and knowing aspect of the mind, intellect) – that it is buried and concealed. Only when you meet a true teacher (*zhēnshī*) who points it out to you, do you realize for the first time that it is already in your own garden, and cannot be found elsewhere. Once the seed is sown, it will surely grow – gradually from elusive to apparent, naturally developing to maturity. The author (of *Wùzhēn piān*) says, “You should cultivate your own garden.” Those who follow side tracks (*pángmén*) and deviant paths (*wàidào*), seeking outside themselves, should wake up and turn back.

*Liú Yīmíng, Wùzhēn zhízhǐ, ZW253, DS17*

He also criticizes writers who, clinging to their own views, digress from the true and essential teachings and put forward their own interpretations, misguiding impressionable and susceptible seekers:

Since ancient times, immortals and true human beings (*zhēn*, *i.e.* sages) have written alchemical scriptures and Daoist books, putting forth their best effort to describe things by using thousands of symbols and hundreds of metaphors, in order to shed light on the essence of the *Dào*. Although their words differ, the principles are the same. They all illuminate the root and origin of the gold elixir (*jīndān*). It is not like later times, when the more books there were, the more people were confused, all promoting their own opinions, hastily entering side doors (*pángmén*).

*Liú Yīmíng, Wùzhēn zhízhǐ, ZW253, DS17*

He is saying that although the language may differ, true masters bring the same message, while others misdirect seekers into side tracks. Therefore,



the unknown author of the *Scripture on the Three Pure Subtle Natures* (C18th) – attributing his collection of sayings to master Lǚ Dòngbīn (b.796 CE) – exhorts would-be spiritual practitioners to seek a true teacher:

Practitioners, let me tell you this: you must follow the teachings of a genuine master (*zhèngshī*). Do not be deceived (*wúhuò*) by falsehoods and take to side roads (*pángmén*).

*Qīngwēi sānpīn zhēnjīng*, ZW225

Master Liú Yīmíng also contrasts the “great path” with “side-road practices”, adding that the “great path” is to be followed by living in the world, not by seeking seclusion in monastic or solitary life:

Free of coverings, illuminating, noble and boundless is the great path of the gold elixir (*jīndān*). It is practised (while living) in the world. It is not a restricted path (*xiǎodào*) of solitude or seclusion by which one escapes from the world and avoids life. It is necessary, however, to conceal enlightenment and blend in with the world, adapting with integrity and flexibility, going against the current while appearing unknown, emptying the self while concealing the practice, becoming unfathomable to others. Such is the great path, the great process.

Those who seek seclusion or perform strange practices, who sit in meditation halls (*chántáng*) meditating (*dǎzuò*) on emptiness and stilling (*dìng*) the mind, or who circulate life energy (*qì*) and practise contemplation (*cúnxiǎng*), or who manipulate vital essence (*jīng*) and bone essence (*suǐ*), or who engage in external or sexual alchemy or other side-road (*pángmén*) practices – do they dare to practise these openly in the public eye? Practices that cannot be performed in the public eye are false. They are not spiritual practices (*xīuxíng*). How can one’s (original) nature and (true spiritual) life (*xìngmìng*) be learned from them? ...

Those who desire the *Dào* should avoid all side roads (*pángmén*) and deviant paths (*wàidào*), and seek the true subtle awareness (*jué*) where there is no physical form. Only then can they regain their original nature (*běnxìng*).

*Liú Yīmíng, Wúzhēn zhízhī*, ZW253, DS17

See also: **wàidào**.

**pani** (Hw) *Lit.* to shut off, to block, to close; in indigenous Hawaiian healing, to end a healing ceremony. See **kapu kai**.

**pañj kakkā** (Pu) *Lit.* five (*pañj*) Ks (*kakkā*); the five insignia worn by a traditional follower of the *Khālsā* ('Pure') branch of the Sikh religion. They are: uncut hair and beard (*kesh*); a comb (*kanghā*) to keep their hair tidy; a pair of knee-length breeches (*kachh*); a steel bracelet (*karā*) on the right wrist (for protection in battle); and a sword (*kirpān*), so as to be always ready for battle.

According to the traditional history, the *pañj kakkās* were instituted by the tenth Sikh *guru*, Guru Gobind Singh, when introducing his new *khālsā*. The intention was so that a Sikh man could be instantly identified, and could never merge like a coward into the crowd. All those who joined his *khālsā* were thenceforth expected to exhibit these five insignia. Although some commentators have given symbolic moral import to the *pañj kakkās*, they do not, in themselves, appear to possess any particular spiritual significance.

See also: **Sikhism** (1.11).

**pantheism** The doctrine that God is the sole transcendent Reality of which man, nature, and the entire material universe are manifestations; a doctrine identifying God with the material universe and the forces of nature; rarely, also, the worship of a plurality of gods.

See also: **monotheism**.

**pāpadeshanā** (S), **āpattidesanā** (Pa), **sdig pa bshags pa** (T), **chànhuǐ** (C), **sange** (J) *Lit.* instruction (*deshanā*) of wrongdoing (*pāpa*, *āpatti*, *sdig pa*); confession and repentance (*bshags pa*, *chànhuǐ*, *sange*); admission or revealing of transgressions; in *Theravāda* Buddhism, practised communally before a few monastics or before the entire assembled *sangha*; in *Mahāyāna* and *Vajrayāna* Buddhism, generally recited as a formulaic part of a *sūtra* or liturgy, sometimes before an actual or visualized representation of a celestial *buddha*; also called *pāpashodhana* (S. washing away of transgressions).

Confession by *Theravāda* monks and nuns is practised at the fortnightly *uposatha*, before recitation of the *pātimokkha* ('that which is binding', the monastic rules). It is also practised privately on other occasions, and details vary from school to school. Confession at the regular *uposathas* is made to other individual monastics, not necessarily to the entire assembled *sangha*, but at the *pravāraṇā* ceremony, the *uposatha* marking the end of the rainy-season retreat (Pa. *vassa*), the confession is more public and relates to the entire three-month period of the rains retreat. In the latter case, before starting the recitation of the *pātimokkha*, each monk reveals his own specific transgressions and asks the rest of the monastic community (*sangha*) to point out any

other improprieties, wrongdoings or transgressions of the monastic rules that he may have committed, and asks their forgiveness.

In *Theravāda*, *āpattidesanā* is mostly for minor infractions and transgressions of the monastic code. It is intended to relieve the offender of the negative emotions of guilt and shame, and allow him the opportunity to atone and to be rehabilitated by vowing not to repeat the same mistakes. It differs from confession in the Christian Catholic Church, in which the priest to whom a private confession is made is deemed to have the power to absolve even the worst of sins. In Buddhist understanding, nobody has the power to forgive sins and to absolve the perpetrator from their consequences. The way that the effects of deeds, good or bad, are paid for is by suffering their consequences according to the law of *karma* or by eradicating the seed by means of *prajñā* (wisdom). Nevertheless, it is sometimes believed that the effects of bad deeds can be ameliorated or even destroyed by their confession. Confession also helps towards maintaining a smooth and harmonious life in the monastery.

The offences to be confessed are transgressions of rules of conduct laid down in the *pātimokkha*,<sup>1</sup> which is a part of the *Sutta Vibhanga* of the *Vinaya Piṭaka*. The *Sutta Vibhanga* is a commentary on the *pātimokkha*, while the *Vinaya Piṭaka* contains the entire monastic code of discipline. The *pātimokkha* is made up of a core of around 150 primary rules, but the diversification of Buddhism into various schools and ordination lineages has led to differences between the minor rules. In Southeast Asia, where the *Vinaya Piṭaka* is observed, there are 227 rules for *Theravāda* monks and, before the decline of women's lineages, there were 311 for nuns.

The 227 *pātimokkha* rules, and actions regarded as offences against them, are grouped into several categories. Four major *pārājika* (*lit.* defeat) offences result in expulsion from the *sangha*. These are murder, stealing, sexual intercourse, and lying by claiming more spiritual powers or attainment than what one has actually attained. It is emphasized that these offences must be committed intentionally, not accidentally or against one's will.

Offences against thirteen *sanghādisesa* (formal meeting) rules require a communal meeting of at least twenty monks from the *sangha* for a decision of whether or not to impose temporary probation on a transgressor. This generally takes the form of a two-week seclusion for reflection. These transgressions are connected with sexual misdeeds or intentions (*e.g.* telling a woman that she would benefit spiritually by intercourse with a monk), the building of dwelling huts (*e.g.* building too large a hut or building a hut without permission), making unfounded accusations against another monk, being the prime agitator for or secondary supporter of a schism, rejecting well-founded criticism, and so on.

Transgressions of two uncertain (*aniyata*) rules are concerned with being alone with a woman in a private place, where the one who reports the offence

is a layperson. These transgressions are regarded as uncertain because the report cannot be verified, and the outcome therefore depends upon whether the accused admits the offence.

Offences against a group of thirty rules entail forfeiture with confession (*nissaggiya pācittiya*) before a minimum of five monastics. They concern rules associated with the possession of permissible items or the manner in which otherwise permissible items are obtained. These are largely connected with items such as alms bowls (*e.g.* keeping a spare one), robes or blankets (*e.g.* possessing more than the permitted number), and buying, selling, or trading goods. The monk is required to forfeit disallowed items.

Ninety-two *pācittiya* (confession) offences are concerned with the transgression of rules concerning such things as the wearing, cleaning, possession, and the size of robes; frightening or causing anxiety to another monk; striking another monk in anger; telling a deliberate lie; calling the *pātimokkha* into question for being over-fastidious; travelling with a woman or with thieves, even for the short distance between one village and another; intentionally depriving an animal of life; sleeping in the same dwelling as a woman or an unordained person for more than two or three nights consecutively; drinking alcohol or any fermented drink; and so forth. In these instances, only confession is required, no penalty being applied.

There are also four *paṭidesaniya* (acknowledgement) rules concerning those from whom alms food cannot be accepted. Again only confession and acknowledgement of transgression is required.

There are a further eighty-two other *pātimokkha* rules, the transgression of which does not require confession. These comprise twenty-six concerning deportment and etiquette especially in inhabited areas (*e.g.* wearing of robes, speaking, laughter, bodily postures, *etc.*); thirty concerning the receipt of alms food and associated eating habits; sixteen regarding those to whom the *Dhamma* should not be taught (*e.g.* someone carrying a weapon in his hand, wearing shoes or sandals, walking in front, sitting on a higher seat, *etc.*); three concerning urination and defecation when not sick; and seven concerning the settlement of disputes.

Confession as a formal practice and an integral part of the life of a monk or nun is not mentioned in the earliest Buddhist texts. In fact, the entire *Vinaya Piṭaka* is understood to be a later addition to the Pali canon. However, speaking in a general sense, the Buddha does advise the admission of one's mistakes as conducive to spiritual progress. In the *Sāmaññaphala Sutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya*, when the Buddha admonishes a prince for killing his father the king, "for the sake of the throne", the prince responds:

A transgression overcame me, lord, foolish, muddle-headed, and evil  
as I was to kill my father – a righteous man, a righteous king – for the

sake of the throne. May the Blessed One please accept this confession of my evil deed, so that I may restrain myself in the future.

*Dīgha Nikāya 2, Sāmaññaphala Sutta, PTSD2 p.85; cf. DNTB, TBLD p.108*

To this the Buddha replies:

Yes, great king, a transgression overcame you when you killed your father – a righteous man, a righteous king – for the sake of the throne. But because you have acknowledged your transgression as such and have made amends in accordance with the *Dhamma*, we accept your confession. For it is a cause of growth in the *Dhamma* and discipline of the noble ones when, seeing a transgression as such, one makes amends in accordance with the *Dhamma* and exercises restraint in the future.

*Dīgha Nikāya 2, Sāmaññaphala Sutta, PTSD2 p.85; cf. DNTB, TBLD p.108*

Similarly, in the *Ambalaṭṭhika Rāhulovāda Sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya*, the Buddha counsels his son Rāhula to reflect upon the consequences of his actions, and if he has done something wrong, to confess it and try not to do the same thing in the future:

Having done a bodily action, Rāhula, you should reflect on it: “This bodily action I have done – did it lead to my own suffering, to the suffering of others, or to both? Was it an unwholesome bodily action, with painful consequences, painful results?” If, on reflection, you know that it led to your own suffering, to the suffering of others, or to both – that it was an unwholesome bodily action with painful consequences, painful results – then you should confess it, reveal it, lay it open to the teacher or to a wise companion in the holy life. Having confessed it, ... you should exercise restraint in the future. But if on reflection you know that it did not lead to affliction, ... it was a wholesome bodily action with pleasant consequences, pleasant results, then you can abide happy and glad, training day and night in wholesome states.

*Majjhima Nikāya 61, Ambalaṭṭhika Rāhulovāda Sutta, PTSM1 pp.416–17; cf. MNTB, MDBB p.525*

The Buddha then goes on to say the same concerning things that are spoken.

Contrasted with *Theravāda*, *Mahāyāna* confessions are often of a formulaic nature, involving the repetition of general confessional verses, covering a wide variety of unspecified transgressions. Such confessional liturgies are frequently linked to the dedication of merit resulting from good deeds, transferred for the benefit of all sentient beings in their search for enlightenment.

Confessional recitations are also performed on behalf of the deceased, where the intention is the transference of merit to help the dead who may not have had the chance to expiate whatever wrong they did while living, to help bring them release from suffering, and allow them the chance of redemption.

The Chinese *chànhuǐ* means both ‘repentance’ and ‘confession’, and many Chinese Buddhist liturgies contain one or more verses of confession and repentance. In this context, the term *fālù* (to disclose, to confess) is also used. The *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* (‘Flower Garland *Sūtra*’), for instance, includes a formula that is commonly echoed in confessional liturgies:

Whatever evil deeds I may have done in the past,  
bodily, verbally, or mentally,  
under the sway of greed, anger, and delusion –  
I now know shame and repent (*chànhuǐ*) them all.

*Avataṃsaka Sūtra* 40, Vows of Samantabhadra, T10 293:847a16–17; cf. FOSA

The vow is also explained in greater detail:

From beginningless aeons in the past, I have created immeasurable and boundless evil *karma* with my body, mouth and mind, because of greed, hatred, and stupidity. If this evil *karma* had substance and form, the entire cosmic void could not contain it.

I will now completely purify these three *karmas*, and before the assemblies of all *buddhas* and *bodhisattvas*, throughout the *Dharma* realm, in lands as numerous as tiny specks of dust, I sincerely confess and repent (*chànhuǐ*) my offences and vow never to commit them again. I will dwell forevermore in the merit and virtue of the pure precepts.

So it is that when the cosmic void is exhausted, the realms of living beings are exhausted, the *karma* of living beings is exhausted, and the afflictions of living beings are exhausted, then my repentance (*chàn*) will be exhausted. But just as the cosmic void and the afflictions of living beings are endless, so too are my repentance (*chànhuǐ*) and reform. They continue in thought after thought without cessation. My body, mouth and mind never tire of these deeds.

*Avataṃsaka Sūtra* 40, Vows of Samantabhadra, T10 293:845a19–28; cf. FOSA

Sometimes, the list of confessions is extensive, though remaining non-specific. The liturgy of the eighty-eight *buddhas* repentance ceremony, for example, which is performed every other evening in many Chinese Buddhist monasteries, pays homage to eighty-eight celestial *buddhas* of the Chinese Buddhist pantheon, going on to repent of all bad deeds, and to dedicate the merit of good deeds to the enlightenment of all sentient beings. The belief

is that the various celestial *buddhas* invoked will intervene on behalf of the supplicants, providing protection in the future, and forgiving or destroying their bad *karmas* going back over millions of past lives:

In this life or in past lives,  
throughout beginningless birth and death,  
all the many offences that I have either committed myself,  
or instructed others to commit,  
or rejoiced in seeing the committing thereof –

Or at a shrine or temple,  
those possessions of the *saṃgha*  
that I have either stolen myself,  
or instructed others to steal,  
or rejoiced in seeing the stealing thereof –

Or the five atrocious offences  
that I have either committed myself,  
or instructed others to commit,  
or rejoiced in seeing the committing thereof –

Or the ten unwholesome actions  
that I have either committed myself,  
or instructed others to commit,  
or rejoiced in seeing the committing thereof –

All these offences and transgressions,  
whether concealed or not concealed,  
lead to descent into the hells,  
the spirit or animal realms,  
or other painful destinations,  
wilderness lands, low birth,  
and the cycle of sorrow, and other such results.

All these offences and transgressions,  
and all the calamities and misfortunes  
that follow as their results,  
I now confess (*chànhuǐ*) openly and fully,  
and wish for their elimination and absolution. . . .

All the negative *karma* I have committed in the past,  
due to desire, anger and ignorance,  
from time without beginning,

produced from body, speech, and mind,  
 I now confess (*chànhuǐ*) openly and fully.  
*Great Repentance of the Eighty-Eight Buddhas; cf. GREB*

In Chinese Buddhism, such liturgical confessions and repentance have evolved into large public ceremonies intended to alleviate the suffering of both the living and the dead, as in the Hungry Ghosts Festival. Even today, in both East and West, many *Mahāyāna* and *Zen* Buddhists daily recite a variant of the last verse.

A similarly extensive confessional text is a part of the *Suvarṇaprabhāsa Sūtra* ('Golden Light *Sūtra*'). According to a story related in this *sūtra*, the Buddha was expounding from the text at Vulture Peak, near the city of Rājagaha, for the purpose of assisting all sentient beings eradicate their bad or unwholesome deeds. At the same time, Bodhisattva Ruchiraketu ('Beautiful Comet'), who was staying at Rājagaha at the time, dreamed that he saw a golden drum from which emanated a great shining light. The drum was being beaten by a *brāhmaṇ*, causing many verses of confession to proceed forth in the sound of the drum. Awakening from his dream, Ruchiraketu remembered the verses and hastened to Vulture Peak, where he recited them:

Supreme among bipeds,  
 dwelling in worlds of ten directions,  
 with merciful compassionate minds,  
 please pay attention to me.

O *buddhas* possessed of the ten powers:  
 Those terrible wicked acts  
 I have committed in the past –  
 Before your eyes, I confess (*chànhuǐ?*) them all.

Whatever unwholesome deeds I have done:  
 not holding parents as parents,  
 not holding *buddhas* as *buddhas*,  
 not upholding virtuous deeds –

Whatever unwholesome deeds I have done:  
 haughty with the vanity of wealth,  
 haughty with age and youthfulness,  
 haughty with pride of affluence and class – ...

Whatever unwholesome deeds I have done:  
 under the power of a flighty mind,  
 ruled by desire and hatred  
 or oppressed by hunger and thirst –



Whatever unwholesome deeds I have done:  
 when oppressed by affliction,  
 for the sake of pursuing women,  
 or acquiring food, drink, and attire – ...

Childish and veiled by stupidity,  
 blind with desire and hatred,  
 ignorance, arrogance, and pride –  
 These deeds I confess (*chànhuǐ*) in full. ...

Until I am capable of freeing them all  
 from countless oceans of suffering,  
 for ten million aeons I shall strive  
 for the sake of even one sentient being –  
 To these sentient beings I shall reveal  
 this *sūtra* called *Sublime Golden Light*,  
 which rids one of every harmful misdeed,  
 and expounds upon the profound.

Those who for a thousand aeons  
 committed deadly unwholesome deeds,  
 by confessing (*chànhuǐ*) them earnestly once –  
 Through this *sūtra*, all will be purified.

*Golden Light Sūtra 4, 3, T16 663:337a3–b9, KGGL pp.13–15*

In a further elaboration of confession and its benefits, the *Meditation on Samantabhadra Sūtra*, which is often found as an epilogue to the *Lotus Sūtra*, provides detailed instruction on how to visualize and meditate on the imagined form of Samantabhadra in order to remove all *karmas* of both the present and past lives. According to the text, as a result of the meditation and elaborate visualization, Samantabhadra appears before the meditator:

At that time the practitioner, having gained a renewed sense of joy, will make obeisance to the *buddhas* of the ten directions. When he has made obeisance to the *buddhas* of the ten directions, Bodhisattva Samantabhadra will remain in his presence and will teach and explain to him all the deeds and causes from his past existences, enabling him to confess (*fālù*) all the sins that blacken his past. He will then confront the various world-honoured ones and with his own mouth will confess (*fālù*) them. Once he has confessed (*fālù*) them, he will immediately gain that *samādhi* in which the *buddhas* are present before him.

*Meditation on Samantabhadra Sūtra, T9 277:390c15–23; cf. LSOC p.376*

Further detailed instructions follow for the repentance of bad deeds, including inner attachment as well as external wrongdoing, that are associated with the functioning of the six senses (the five physical senses and the mind, according to Buddhist thought). Following this, the *sūtra* asserts:

The Buddha then said to Ānanda, “This is the practice that is called repentance (*chànhuǐ*). This repentance (*chànhuǐ*) is the method of repentance (*chànhuǐ*) carried out by the *buddhas* and great *bodhi-sattvas* of the ten directions.”

*Lotus Sūtra, Meditation on Samantabhadra Sūtra, T9 277:393a5–7, LSOC p.388*

See also: **Buddhist festivals**, **pāpa** (6.2), **chàn**, **pratikramaṇa**, **pūjā**, **uposhadha**.

1. *Vinaya Piṭaka, Sutta Vibhanga, PTSV3–4*; see Thanissaro Bhikkhu, *Buddhist Monastic Code I, BMC1*.

**parikramā** (S/H) *Lit.* walking (*krama*) around (*pari*), roaming about; making a circuit of something, a circumambulation; going clockwise around a holy man, an idol, a sacred hill, a sacred river, a sacred fire (representing *Agni*, the fire god), a sacred plant such as *tulsī*, a sacred tree such as the *pīpal*, a temple, a shrine, a stupa or a *samādhi* (tomb) as an indication of reverence; hence also, a covered walkway around a temple; also known as *pradakshinā* (moving to the right, circumambulation). To keep the object of veneration on one’s right is regarded as a means of expressing reverence. The custom is prevalent in Jain, Buddhist, Hindu, and Sikh traditions.

Circumambulations are not necessarily easy or short. Some *parikramās* are performed in a lying position. The devotee begins in the *sāshṭāṅga namaskāra* prostrate posture, in which eight parts of the body (hands, chest, forehead, knees, and feet) are touching the ground. Friends and relatives then help the devotee to perform the *parikramā* by rolling him along the path. Again, *parikramā* of a river may seem unlikely, but the River Narmadā is regarded as so sacred that pilgrims and *sādhus* make the 1,600-mile journey on foot from its outlet into the Arabian Sea at Bharuch in Gujarat, upriver to its source in the Maikal mountains, and back along the opposite bank. In this way, the river is always on their right hand side.

Similarly, the Govardhān hill in Uttar Pradesh is considered sacred due to its association with Kṛishṇa. According to the legend, Kṛishṇa protected the inhabitants of Vṛindāvan from the ire of the deity *Indra*, following which he instructed them to worship the hill. A religious festival commemorating the event is held on the day after *Dīwali*. After *pūjā* (worship) and a vast quantity of food offerings made to Kṛishṇa, devotees perform a thirteen-mile

*parikramā* of the hill. The *parikramā* is considered more meritorious if the devotee carries a clay pot of milk in one hand and a pot of smoking incense in the other. The milk pot has a hole in the bottom, and the devotee is accompanied by someone who constantly refills the pot. Some pilgrims perform the *parikramā* as a series of contiguous full-length prostrations (*dandavat*) on the ground, sometimes with 108 obeisances at each standing place. Such *parikramās* can take several months to complete.

A story is told in the *Shiva Purāṇa* concerning the two sons of *Shiva* and *Pārvatī*, *Kārttikeya* and *Gaṇeśa*. When the boys were old enough to be married, *Shiva* and *Pārvatī* discussed between themselves which of their sons should be married first; but since they loved both their sons equally, they could not reach a decision. They therefore called both the boys and told them of their predicament. As a means of resolving the difficulty, they suggested that the one who could first complete a circumambulation (*parikramā*) of the earth would be the first to get married.

*Kārttikeya* immediately set out on the journey, while *Gaṇeśa* remained at home wondering how he would be able to complete the task because of his corpulent body. At last a solution dawned upon him. Having taken a bath and requesting his parents to be seated, he worshipped them, circumambulating and bowing to them seven times. He then requested that his marriage should be arranged. His parents reminded him that he must first complete a journey around the earth. To their surprise, *Gaṇeśa* claimed that he had already done so, quoting the scriptures, which say, “One who worships his parents and circumambulates them deserves the fruit and merit of circumambulating the earth.” *Shiva* and *Pārvatī* accepted his claim and arranged his marriage before *Kārttikeya* returned from his journey around the earth.<sup>1</sup>

See also: **pradakṣiṇā**.

1. *Shiva Purāṇa*, *Rudra Saṃhitā*, *Kumārakhaṇḍa* 4:19.16–55, SPS2 pp.794–98.

**paritrāṇa** (S), **paritta** (Pa), **yongs su skyob pa** (T), **míngghù** (C), **myōgo**, **myōgokyō** (J) *Lit.* protection, preservation; rescue, deliverance; means of protection; a protective verse or charm; unseen (*míng*) protection (*hù*); in *Theravāda* Buddhism, various texts and formulaic verses (*paritta suttas*, ‘protection discourses’), the chanting of which is believed to possess the power to confer protection and blessing; also, the act of collecting such texts, as well as the recitation of passages from them. The *paritta* texts of Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia are mirrored in the *rakshā* (S. protection; Pa. *rakkhā*) texts of India, Tibet, and East Asia.

The *Theravāda* practice of lovingkindness (*mettā*) includes wishing all beings protection against danger and calamity through recitation of *paritta*

*suttas*. The intention is to help others as well as oneself in situations where good wishes for protection or blessings are appropriate. Several collections of *paritta* texts exist, such as *The Book of Protection*, called the *Catubhāṇavāra* ('Text of the Four Recitals') or just the *Paritta* in Pali. In Sri Lanka it is known as *Pirit Potha* ('Protection Book'), and is so popular that most people, even children, know some of its passages by heart. In many instances, it is the *paritta* texts that are most familiar to the Buddhist laity of Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia.

The practice of reciting *paritta* texts, some of which are simple prayers for protection and good fortune, is mentioned only rarely in the Pali canon, and it is clear that a large proportion of these texts were written for ritual purposes long after the canonical texts had become established. The absence of genuine support among the canonical texts for practices that in many cases are clearly based on superstition has provided support for Buddhist reformers who have sought to return to religious and spiritual practices more closely founded upon their primary, canonical scriptures.

It is commonly believed that *paritta* recitations will bring happiness and prosperity, and provide protection from a wide variety of misfortunes, real or imagined. They are recited at Buddhist ceremonies such as births, name givings, weddings, funerals, house blessings, and so on. Even the blessing of water buffaloes and motorcycles is accompanied by the chanting of *paritta* texts. *Paritta* rituals are used to pacify the disconsolate spirits of the dead who have been unable to enter the next world and are trapped as incorporeal spirits in this world, where their frustration and distress is believed to lead them to cause sickness and various calamities. *Paritta* ceremonies are also conducted in the attempt to bring about healing of the sick, ensure a good harvest, help pass an examination, counter the negative effects of the planets according to astrological considerations, or simply to earn merit (*punya*). Ceremonies can sometimes last all night, and in some instances may extend over a week.

Sometimes, the monks who perform these ceremonies are physically connected to the participants by a length of string, along which blessings and protection are believed to flow from the officiating monk to the participants. Various ritual items, including a water pot, are tied to the string, and when the ceremony is ended, the water is sprinkled on the participants, and pieces of the string are tied around their necks or wrists.<sup>1</sup> The items tied to the string include amulets and talismans in the shape of miniature images of the Buddha, famous monks, kings and mythological characters, which are believed to have become imbued with protective properties and which are subsequently worn.

'Auspicious' texts from canonical sources that are found in the various *paritta* anthologies include the *Mangala Sutta* ('Discourse on Blessings'), the *Ratana Sutta* ('Jewel Discourse') and the *Mettā Sutta* ('Discourse on Lovingkindness'), all three from the *Sutta Nipāta*, and the *Ātānātiya Sutta* ('Discourse on the *Ātānātiya* Protective Spell') from the *Dīgha Nikāya*. But the Buddha makes it clear in the *Mangala Sutta* itself that it is the possession

and practice of the virtues he mentions in its verses that should be regarded as blessings, something that the chanting of the verses themselves cannot confer.<sup>2</sup>

As an ancient custom, the recitation of *paritta* texts was probably prevalent in the time of the Buddha. In fact, despite his comments in texts such as the *Mangala Sutta*, if the various incidents related are taken as historical, the Buddha himself appears not only to have sanctioned their use but, in some instances, to have written them, each appropriate to the circumstances. In a story related in the *Ahi Sutta* of the *Anguttara Nikāya*, for example – which appears in *The Book of Protection* as the *Khandha Paritta* (‘Protection of the Aggregates’) – a monk dies from a snake bite. When the Buddha comes to hear of it, he remarks, “That monk has not suffused the four royal tribes of snakes (the *virūpakkhas* etc.) with thoughts of lovingkindness (*mettā*). Had he done so, he would not have died of a snake bite.” Following this, the Buddha recites some verses by which to send loving thoughts to the snake kingdom and the realms of other creatures, in order to provide protection from them:

May I have *mettā* towards *virūpakkhas*;  
Towards *erāpathas* may I have *mettā*;  
May my *mettā* be towards *chabyāputtas*;  
Towards *kaṇhā-gotamakas* also *mettā* may I have.

May I have *mettā* towards the footless;  
And towards bipeds too, my *mettā* may I have;  
May I have *mettā* towards the quadrupeds;  
And towards the many-footed also, *mettā* may I have.

Let not the footless do me harm,  
nor those that have two feet.  
Let not quadrupeds do me harm,  
nor those endowed with many feet.

All beings, all living creatures –  
may good fortune befall them all.  
May not the least harm befall them.

Limitless is the Buddha, limitless is the *Dhamma* (Teaching), limitless is the *sangha* (Buddhist community). Limited are creeping creatures – snakes, scorpions, centipedes, spiders, lizards, and rats. I have guarded myself, I have made my protection (*paritta*). Depart from me, you beings. I bow down to the Blessed One; and to the seven *sammā-sambuddhas* (supreme *buddhas*).

*Anguttara Nikāya* 4:67, *Ahi Sutta* (*Khandha Paritta*),

*PTSK2* pp.72–73; cf. *BPPT* p.44

Another popular *paritta* from canonical sources is the *Angulimāla Paritta*, a prose text that although absent from the *Book of Protection* is commonly used at childbirth. The text appears as the *Angulimāla Sutta* in the *Majjhima Nikāya*. According to the story, the Venerable Angulimāla is out on his alms round when he encounters a woman in labour. When he relates the incident to the Buddha, the Buddha teaches him an appropriate *paritta* that will help her. Returning to the lady, he sits near her and repeats the *paritta*, which brings about the instant and safe delivery of the baby. The text is still used for this purpose today. The *paritta* given to Angulimāla by the Buddha is very simple:

Sister, since I was born into noble birth (*i.e.* since becoming a disciple of the Buddha), I am not aware of having intentionally deprived any living being of its life. By this declaration of truth may you be well, and may your unborn child be well!

*Majjhima Nikāya* 86, *Angulimāla Sutta* (*Angulimāla Paritta*),

*PTSM2* p.103; *cf. BPPT* p.128

The declaration of a truth in this manner is often presented as the power that makes a text effective. In this instance, there is an intentional irony, for it is also said in the same *sutta* that prior to his acceptance as a disciple by the Buddha, the Venerable Angulimāla had been a murderous highwayman.

The origin of such practices, which in one form or another are common to probably all human cultures, lies in the attempt to allay the uncertainties and fears that accompany human existence. Their benefit arises from the comfort provided by the thought that something has been done to ward off, remedy or reverse the ever-present problems of life. Chanting such texts, either alone or in a group, is likely to bring some degree of psychological strength to the chanters to be able to face the events of life. It may help to calm the mind and generate feelings of goodwill, especially if that is the subject of the chant itself. As a consequence, a person's outlook will perhaps become more positive, leading to better health, well-being, and a more comfortable passage through life. But mere ritual, by itself, will have little or no positive effect. Much, however, depends upon the individuals concerned, their underlying mental attitude and belief, and their unalterable destiny or *karma* (Pa. *kamma*). In the *Milinda-Pañha* ('Questions of King Milinda'), probably written sometime between 100 BCE and 200 CE, the Venerable Nāgasena tells the king that three things will make the recitation of *paritta* ineffective: "the covering of *kamma* (*kammāvaraṇa*), the covering of impurity (*kilesāvaraṇa*), and lack of faith (*asaddhā*)".<sup>3</sup>

See also: **mangala**.

1. See "paritta," *Oxford Dictionary of Buddhism*, ODB.

2. *Sutta Nipāta* 2:4, *Mangala Sutta*, *PTSN* pp.46–47.
3. *Questions of King Milinda*, *PTSQ* pp.153–54; cf. *SBE35* p.218.

**parousia** (Gk) *Lit.* a presence, a coming. See **second coming**.

**parva** (H/Pk) *Lit.* festival, holiday; auspicious day; from the Sanskrit *parvan* (pause, division, section), a word whose spread of meaning includes certain phases of the moon and occasions related to them; a general term for Indian religious festivals, used especially in the Jain tradition.

Jain festivals include the eight-day, *Shvetāmbara* festival of *Paryushaṇa* and the equivalent, ten-day *Digambara* festival of *Dasha-Lakṣhaṇa-Parvan*. These two festivals are often used by the laity as times of fasting, retreat, meditation, and reconnection with the fundamentals of the Jain faith. Jains also celebrate the pan-Indian festival of *Dīwali* as the day on which Mahāvīra, the twenty-fourth and last *Tīrthankara* in the present cycle of time, according to Jain cosmology attained liberation and enlightenment. Other Jain festivals include:<sup>1</sup>

*Mahāvīra Jayantī* (S/H). Commemorates the birth (*jayantī*, victorious) of Mahāvīra; held on the thirteenth day of the bright half of *Chaitra* (March/April); common to both *Shvetāmbaras* and *Digambaras*.

*Akshaya Tṛitīyā* (S), *Akha Tīj* (Pk). *Lit.* undying (*akshaya*) third (*tṛitīyā*). Commemorates the first time that alms were given to a mendicant monk in the present cycle; held on the third day of the bright half of the spring month of *Vaiśākha* (April/May).

*Olī* (Pk) or *Avalī* (S). A nine-day *Shvetāmbara* festival devoted to worship of the *siddha-chakra* (wheel of perfection), held twice-yearly from the seventh to the fifteenth (full-moon) days of the bright half of the months of *Chaitra* (March/April) and *Āshwin* (September/October), during which time the *āyambil* diet of plain and tasteless, boiled food is adopted. The *siddha-chakra* is a *yantra* (symbolic drawing) or *maṇḍala*, which represents the five *parameshṭhins* (great beings) who are deemed worthy of worship, together with the four factors considered as essential on the path to liberation (*moksha*).

*Kārtik(a) Pūrṇimā* (S/H). A festival ending the four-month rainy season (*chāturmāsa*), during which wandering mendicants have returned to their monasteries; held on the full moon (*pūrṇimā*) day of *Kārtik* (October/November), which falls around fourteen days after *Dīwali*. At this time, the laity formally express their gratitude to the monks for their



guidance and their sermons (*pravachana*), and the monks resume their wanderings. *Shvetāmbaras* regard the day as especially auspicious for a pilgrimage to the summit of Mount Shatruñjaya, near the city of Pālitānā in Gujarat. The hills, home to hundreds of Jain temples, are believed to have been sanctified by Ṛishabha, the first *Tīrthankara* in the present cycle, when he delivered his first discourse from the hill-top temple.

*Jñāna Pañchamī* ('Knowledge Fifth'). A *Shvetāmbara* festival at which the Jain scriptures are venerated as the source of religious knowledge to humanity, and commemorating the time when the scriptures were first put down in writing after centuries of oral transmission; the fifth day of the bright half of *Kārtik* (October/November) and the fifth day of the Jain New Year.

*Maryādā Mahotsava* ('Great Festival of Restraint'). A *Shvetāmbara Terāpanthī* festival first established by the fourth *Terāpanthī* leader, Āchārya Jaya, in 1864 to commemorate and reinforce the rules of monastic conduct laid down by the reformer Āchārya Bhikshu (Muni Bhīkhanjī, 1726–1803), founder of the *Terāpanthī* movement. The festival takes place over three or four days during the bright half of *Māgh* (January/February). At this time, as many of the several hundred *Shvetāmbara Terāpanthī* monks and nuns as are able come together at the place where their *āchārya* (teacher, leader) is residing, and make a formal vow of steadfast allegiance to him. The *āchārya* reads out the rules of conduct, exhorts the mendicants to follow them faithfully, and studies the annual reports of their activities, behaviour and adherence to the rules of conduct given to him by the leaders of the various sub-groups. He also organizes them into smaller travelling groups, decides where they will travel (often to distant places), and arranges where they will stay during the next rainy season. It is a remarkable exhibition of organization and self-discipline. Originally intended as a ceremony for mendicants, the festival has grown in popularity, and in present times as many as 50,000 people may attend.<sup>2</sup>

See also: **Dasha-Lakshana-Parvan, Olī, Paryushana.**

1. See mostly *A to Z of Jainism*, AZJW p.246.
2. See "Maryādā Mahotsava," *A to Z of Jainism*, AZJW and "Maryada Mahotsava," Official Site of the Shwetambar Terapanth, terapanthinfo.com.

**Paryushan(a)** (S/H), **Pajjosavanā** (Pk) *Lit.* abiding, coming together; an eight-day *Shvetāmbara* Jain festival, held during the period (*chāturmāsa*, four months)



when wandering mendicants have returned to their monastery for the rainy season; begins on the twelfth or thirteenth of the dark half of *Shrāvaṇ* (July/August), though there are differences in calculation of the date between various subjects; the most significant event in the *Shvetāmbara* religious calendar, the last day being regarded as the most sacred; said to be an earthly counterpart to an eight-part *pūjā* performed by the *devas* (gods) for the *Tīrthankaras*; equivalent to the ten-day *Digambara* festival of *Dasha-Lakshaṇa-Parvan* (‘Festival of Ten Virtues’), which is also called *Paryushaṇa* or *Paryushaṇa Parva*.

For some laypeople, the festival period is like that of a temporary monastic retreat. It is a renewal of faith and practice devoted to religious activities, especially the exercise of practices such as fasting, spiritual study, and meditation. The last day is known as *Kshamāvanī* (‘Forgiveness Day’) or *Samvatsarī Pratikramaṇa* (‘Annual Confession of Wrongdoing’), often shortened to just *Samvatsarī*. *Samvatsarī Pratikramaṇa* consists of sincerely saying “*Micchāmi dukkaḍaṃ* (may all my wrongdoings be fruitless)” or “*Uttam kshamā* (supreme forgiveness)” to one another. Letters may also be sent and telephone calls made to friends and relatives. The sayings imply, “If I should have caused you any offence, knowingly or unknowingly, in thought, word or deed, then I ask your forgiveness.” The *kalyāṇakas* (auspicious moments) of the conception and birth of Mahāvīra, the twenty-fourth and last *Tīrthankara* in the present cycle, according to Jain cosmology, are also celebrated at this time.

Fasting may consist of eating only once a day or fasting completely on the first and last days of the festival. Some laypeople pass the whole time with mendicants, eating nothing and drinking only boiled water. A daily discourse is delivered by a mendicant, with recitations from the *Kalpa Sūtra*, including the birth story of Mahāvīra on the fifth day of the festival. Some *Sthānakavāsīs* (hall dwellers), one of the two main *Shvetāmbara* sub-schools, also recite passages from the *Antagaḍa Sūtra*, which contains legends of those who had attained liberation during the time of Mahāvīra and Neminātha, the latter being the twenty-second *Tīrthankara* in the present cycle.

See also: **Dasha-Lakshaṇa-Parvan, micchāmi dukkaḍaṃ, pratikramaṇa, upavāsa.**

**pāshāṇḍya, pāshaṇḍa** (S), **pāsaṇḍa** (Pa), **pākhaṇḍ** (H), **pākhaṇḍ** (Pu) *Lit.* deceit, hypocrisy, falsehood, pretence, heresy; false doctrine, heretical creed, false practices; hence, *pākhaṇḍ karma* (false practices), implying external rites and ceremonies. *Pāshaṇḍa* (S) and *pāsaṇḍa* (Pa) also means heretic, hypocrite, or religious impostor.

In the sacred literature of Jainism, *pāshaṇḍi-mūḍhatā* (perverse folly, perverse confusion, perverse belief) is listed as one of the three forms of false belief. It refers to belief in false or pseudo holy men or ascetics, following and

revering them, especially with the hope of being the beneficiary of their supposed miraculous powers. *Pāshaṇḍi-mūḍhatā* is described by Samantabhadra (c.C2nd–5th CE) as reverence for ascetics who are engaged in worldly activities, who have not relinquished all possessions, and who harm other beings (*hiṃsā*). Hemachandra (c. 1088–1173) describes false *gurus* as those who desire women, gold, wealth, and houses; who consume meat, honey, alcohol, and *ananta-kāyas* (plants believed to be the dwelling of countless souls, such as fungi and moulds); who are not celibate, but are attached to wives and children; and who teach false doctrines.<sup>1</sup>

The two other forms of *mūḍhatā* are: *loka-mūḍhatā* (false belief in places), a belief that certain rituals, such as bathing in rivers regarded as sacred, will lead to holiness and the acquisition of religious merit; and *deva-mūḍhatā* (false belief in deities), the belief in nonexistent deities, together with the attempt to propitiate them by prayer, offerings, and so on.<sup>2</sup> *Para-pāshaṇḍi-prashaṃsā* and *para-pāshaṇḍi-saṃstava* (admiration and praise of the followers of other doctrines) are two of the five *atichāras* (transgressions), the other three being: doubt (*shanka*); desire (*kāṅkshā*), especially attraction to doctrines other than Jainism; and doubt (*vichikitsā*) concerning the value of some human activities, which includes the repugnance felt towards unwashed Jain ascetics due to their odour.<sup>3</sup>

In Buddhism, *pāsaṇḍa* refers to ‘heretical’ creeds or religious systems other than Buddhism. In the *Bhikkhuṇī Saṃyutta* of the *Saṃyutta Nikāya*, the *bhikkhuṇī* Sīsūpacālā tells *Māra*, the Buddhist ‘devil’ or negative power, that she follows no creed (*pāsaṇḍa*) but that of the Buddha. On hearing this expression of faith, *Māra* immediately disappears:

*Māra* the Evil One approached the *bhikkhuṇī* Sīsūpacālā and said to her: “Whose creed (*pāsaṇḍa*) do you approve of, *bhikkhuṇī*?”

SĪSŪPACĀLĀ:

I don’t approve of anyone’s creed (*pāsaṇḍa*), friend.

MĀRA:

Under whom have you shaved your head?

You appear to be an ascetic,

yet you do not approve of any creed (*pāsaṇḍa*).

So why do you wander as if bewildered?

SĪSŪPACĀLĀ:

Outside of here, the followers of creeds (*pāsaṇḍa*)  
place their confidence in opinions.

I do not approve of their teachings:

they are not skilled in the *Dhamma*.

But there is one born in the Sakyan clan,  
the enlightened one, without an equal,  
conqueror of all, subduer of *Māra*,  
everywhere undefeated, everywhere free and unattached –  
One with vision who sees everything.

Having attained the elimination of all *kamma*,  
liberated in the extinction of acquisitions,  
that Blessed One is my teacher:  
His is the teaching of which I approve.

Then *Māra* the Evil One, realizing, “The *bhikkhu* Sīsūpacālā knows me,” became sad and disappointed, and disappeared right there and then.

*Samyutta Nikāya 5:8, Sīsūpacālā Sutta, PTSS1 pp.133–34; cf. CDBB p.228*

Many centuries later, in the teachings of Indian *sants*, all paths other than that of the divine Name or Word are regarded as essentially ‘false’, in the sense that they do not lead to complete salvation and union with the Divine:

All remain deluded in false practices (*pākhaṇḍ*):  
only a rare devotee, O Lord, repeats Your Name.

*Kabīr, Granthāvalī, Pad 183, KG p.112, KWGN p.429*

Enshrine the True One in your heart:  
this is the most excellent action (*karṇī*).  
All other hypocritical actions (*pākhaṇḍ*) and devotions bring only ruin.

*Guru Nānak, Ādi Granth 1343, AGK*

See also: **hypocrisy** (►4).

1. Hemachandra, *Yoga Shāstra* 2:6, *YHBI*; Samantabhadra, *Ratnakaraṇḍa Shrivakāchāra* 1:23–24, *RSSP*; see R. Williams, *Jaina Yoga*, *JYMS* p.49.
2. Hemachandra, *Yoga Shāstra* 2:6, 4:102, *YHBI*; Samantabhadra, *Ratnakaraṇḍa Shrivakāchāra* 1:12, 23–24, *RSSP*; see R. Williams, *Jaina Yoga*, *JYMS* p.49.
3. See R. Williams, *Jaina Yoga*, *JYMS* pp.46–47.

**Passion of Christ** Christ’s suffering from the time of the last supper to his death on the cross, according to the accounts given in the four gospels. Although the gospels agree on the broad outline of events, there are many places where they disagree, and the exact history of what happened will always remains uncertain. The story has also been presented in accordance with the viewpoint

of Christian faith and doctrine, to proclaim Jesus as the messiah and Son of God, according to various biblical 'prophecies'.

The one fact that is consistent with all four accounts is that Jesus was arrested in the evening by the Jewish authorities, following the last supper with his disciples. The following day, he was condemned and crucified under Roman law. However, while the three synoptic accounts, being based upon *Mark*, follow more or less the same plan, the account in *John* presents an alternative narrative. According to the synoptics, the crucifixion was on the first day of the Passover.<sup>1</sup> John, on the other hand, ever seeking symbolism in his story, has Jesus crucified on the day before the Passover, the day on which the paschal lambs were slaughtered.<sup>2</sup> In *John*, Jesus is symbolized as the Lamb of God,<sup>3</sup> sacrificed to redeem the sin of the world, and the last supper is not the Passover meal, as it is in the synoptics. Either variation could have been adopted for theological motivations. The Passover, it may be noted, began in the evening with the Passover meal, according to the Jewish evening-day division of the twenty-four hours.

The reasons for Jesus' conviction are less certain. According to the gospels, he is convicted of blasphemy by a hastily convened session of the Sanhedrin, the supreme Jewish court. In *Matthew* and *Mark*, he is sentenced to death that very evening, and handed over to Pilate the following morning.<sup>4</sup> Luke,<sup>5</sup> on the other hand, has Jesus face the Jewish court the following morning, who then hand him over to Pilate without passing any sentence. Pilate, who is portrayed in the gospels as a far milder man than is known from other historical accounts, does his best to release Jesus, but in the end succumbs to Jewish pressure, and passes a sentence of crucifixion. In accordance with later Christian polemic, it is thus the Jews, rather than the Romans, who are primarily responsible for Jesus' death.

But all four gospel accounts differ on significant details. In any case, it must be asked what witnesses there were to have given the disciples an exact record of events. Scholars have also pointed out that the synoptic account of Jesus' questioning by the Jews is entirely Christocentric, and is most unlikely to have taken place in the way described. The question put by the Jewish authorities, "Are you the Christ (Messiah), the Son of the Blessed?"<sup>6</sup> is an unlikely question because the 'Son of God' was not a Jewish title for the messiah. The question reflects later Christian controversies with the Jews.

Scholars have also questioned whether the Jewish Sanhedrin would have had the authority to pass a death sentence. Some say that for serious religious offences such as blasphemy, they had the power to pass a sentence of death by stoning. Others maintain that their decisions had to be ratified by the Romans. In any event, crucifixion was a Roman method of execution, not Jewish.

Discrepancies in the events surrounding the last supper and after, and of the last words of Christ,<sup>7</sup> like the other inconsistencies, all point to an absence

of eye witnesses, and to the circulation of a variety of anecdotes concerning Jesus' last days, coloured by the needs of later Christian doctrine.

Although the Passion of Christ has always been a subject of Christian thought, it was not until medieval times that devotion to and contemplation on the Passion reached its full development. The first known instance of the *stigmata*, for instance, in which devotees spontaneously develop the wounds of the cross due to the intensity of their concentration, was that of St Francis of Assisi (c. 1181–1226). Since then over three hundred cases, with reasonable claims to genuineness, have been recorded.<sup>8</sup>

Practically all books of medieval Christian mysticism speak of meditation upon the Passion, and many have extensive sections devoted to the subject. In their devotion, and according to Christian doctrine, contemplatives have focused on their own sinfulness, and the suffering that Christ went through for the sake of their redemption. The author of the *Cloud of Unknowing* writes:

Those who enter by the door, when they meditate on the Passion of Christ, grieve over their wickedness, which caused that Passion. They bitterly reprove themselves, feeling pity and compassion for their good master who suffered so terribly and undeservedly, for it was they who deserved to suffer, yet did not. Then they lift up their hearts to contemplate the love and goodness of his Godhead, who chose to descend so low as to become a mortal man.

*Book of Privy Counselling* 9; cf. *CU* (15) pp.163–64, *CUCW* p.187, *LPD* p.55

Walter Hilton describes visions of Jesus' sufferings:

When a person is meditating upon God, the grace of the Holy Spirit may move him to feelings of love and spiritual fervour at the thought of Christ's Passion or some other event in His earthly life. . . .

When you are moved to meditate on God, your mind is suddenly withdrawn from all worldly and material things, and you seem to see our Lord Jesus in your soul in bodily form as He lived upon earth. You see Him taken by the Jews and bound as a thief, beaten and despised, scourged and condemned to death. You see with what humility He bore the cross on His back, and with what cruelty he was nailed to it. You see the crown of thorns on His head, and the sharp spear that pierced Him to the heart. At this sight, you feel your heart stirred to such compassion and pity towards your Lord Jesus that you mourn, weep, and cry out with every power of body and soul, marvelling at the goodness and love, patience and humility of your Lord Jesus, who was willing to suffer such pain for so sinful and wretched a creature as yourself. At the same time you feel the goodness and mercy of our Lord so strongly that your heart leaps for joy and love of Him, and you

shed many sweet tears, having a sure trust in the forgiveness of your sins and the salvation of your soul through the merits of His precious Passion. . . . The Passion and precious death of our Lord are the means whereby the soul of man is re-formed, and without them we could never have been restored to His likeness nor come to the joys of heaven.

*Walter Hilton, Ladder of Perfection 1:5, 35, 2:2, LPH pp.5, 39, 116*

The unknown author of the *Book of the Poor in Spirit* writes of the purifying effect of such meditation, and of the great joy it brings:

If a man steeps himself in the Passion, he is purified, and a light is kindled in this purity, a light that burns and consumes all luxury of the body. A spiritual, divine ecstasy is granted which surpasses all bodily rapture. Indeed, he who desires this divine joy, must take to himself the wounds of our Lord. If he continues to do this, he will overflow with a joy so divine that he will wonder where this great grace comes from. The wounds of our Lord are full of sweetness, and all men, if they only knew it, would turn to His Passion. If a man did not do this for God's sake, he would do it for his own, since all men desire comfort.

*Book of the Poor in Spirit 3:1.1, BPSG p.162*

So deep has been their devotion and meditation on the Passion that some Christian mystics have had visions of its various scenes that have seemed to them to be real.<sup>9</sup>

See also: **Lamb** (7.1).

1. *Mark* 14:1, 12.
2. *John* 13:1, 18:1ff.
3. *John* 1:29, 35–36.
4. *Mark* 14:43ff.; *Matthew* 26:46ff.
5. *Luke* 22:47ff.
6. *Mark* 14:61, *RSV*.
7. *Mark* 15:34; *Matthew* 27:46; *Luke* 23:46; *John* 19:30.
8. See “devotion to the passion of Christ,” *Catholic Encyclopedia*, 1911.
9. *E.g.* Angela of Foligno, *Book of Divine Consolation* 1, 3:1, *BDC* pp.6, 202, *passim*.

**pātai-atua** (Mo) *Lit.* consultation (*pātai*) with ancestor deities (*atua*); a three day, highly sacred, ritual invocation of the gods for spiritual guidance and support; a divination ritual; a specific form of *whakatoro* ceremony, or invocation of the gods, although *whakatoro* for other purposes follow a similar pattern.

The contemporary writer Samuel Timoti Robinson of the Kāi Tahu, the principal tribe of New Zealand's South Island, explains, going on to describe a *pātai-atua* that he had attended:

This particular *whakatoro* ceremony has the name of *pātai-atua*, roughly meaning 'consulting the god'. It is a religious consultation where the *atua* is invoked to ask a question of it or to secure a good outcome with the god's approval. The answer given comes from a divination procedure making this ritual a two-way communication between the *atua* and the *tangata* (human being).

The great *pātai-atua* ceremony is performed when people seek the aid of a higher power. It is an invocation for spiritual guidance and support, and also a divination ritual wrapped into one ceremony. The *atua* is invoked to secure good favour for the land and people while, by divination, questions are asked of it to foretell the outcome of any circumstances. The intentions of the operators must be right in order to do the ritual, and the reason for doing it must be important. I once did the ritual and the results were very good. To the best of my knowledge the only other time it was done was at the rising of the Pleiades, but that ritual was not a consultation. Instead it was a 'thanksgiving' ritual with slight variations.

The ritual itself lasts for three days. The first day makes *tapu* (sacred, restricted), the second is a preparation day, and on the third the ritual is performed. During the rite, *Rongo-i-amo* (the rainbow minister) is invoked before *Kahukura* (the rainbow god, a principal *atua*). He is the messenger and attendant of *Kahukura* and is woken to fetch his master for the ritual. The ancient ritual follows.

*Samuel Timoti Robinson, Tohunga, TRAK pp.168–69*

Robinson now describes the way in which the ceremony he had attended was conducted. The three days of the actual ceremony were preceded by several days of preparation on the part of the officiating *tohunga*. They fasted and meditated, saying prayers every day, seeking mental clarity. One of the *tohunga* was chosen as the *pātai*, the medium to consult with and to receive messages from the *atua*. Items required for the ceremony included: four pieces of bark, to be used for divining the responses of the *atua*; a simply fabricated image of *Rongo-i-amo*; loincloths worn by the *tohunga*; bowls of water; leaves of the *miro* (brown pine, *Prumnopitys ferruginea*); and various sacrificial items such as captives, food, dogs, pigs, and *kūmara* (sweet potato), all uncooked.<sup>1</sup>

The first day of the ceremony was passed in making the chosen site (the *pae*) *tapu* (sacred, restricted). Here, the *whakapakoko* (godstick) of *Kahukura*, wrapped in cloth and kept in a sacred box, was secreted in a flax bush (*Phormium tenax*), a native New Zealand plant with long sword-like leaves

arranged in a rosette. Making the site *tapu* included restrictions on people's movement and activities, lighting no fires, invocation of spirits, and so on. At the end of the day, the *tohunga* publicly declared the site to be *tapu* "by blowing the *pūtaratara* (conch shell) trumpet and shouting the declaratory prayer over the village".

The second day began with the *tohunga* chanting a *karakia* to the rising sun, and was passed in purification of the place of worship. The *marae* (the area of the *pae* set aside for the ceremonial functions) was cleared of untidy vegetation, with the debris deposited in a special area, to avoid infringing the *tapu*. Various ablutions and cleansing rituals were also performed. Stones and boulders were placed in a semicircle whose opening faced away from the sacred area. A large flat stone was placed at the focal point of the *marae* to serve as a *tūāhu* (altar) for *Kahukura*, and below this a smaller flat stone as a shrine for *Rongo-i-amo*. Other ritual objects were also located around the site. When the site was ready, the *tohunga* chanted the *karakia*:

There is life in the world,  
     the shrine of *Kahukura* is restored.  
 It is cleansed and handsome,  
     the placing of the stones is renewed,  
     the altar is renewed,  
     the god will come,  
     the people will come.

*Māori Karakia, in TRAK p.171*

Offerings of *miro* leaves were then made and *karakia* chanted in order to propitiate other *atua*. *Rongo-i-amo* the messenger was then invoked, to go to his lord *Kahukura* in his "dwelling place in the heavens". For this, a small temporary godstick created for *Rongo-i-amo* was ritually washed, and a suitable *karakia* was chanted. In the evening, the *pātai* and the second *tohunga*, who acted as his *toa* (guard), retired to their homes for rest. They acknowledged any *atua* that appeared to them by throwing a bowl of water out of the window of their house, which was replenished by others waiting to fill them, leaving the full bowls by the door of the house. The other *tohunga* remained at the *pae*, wearing nothing but their loincloths, despite the cold. In their *karakia*, however, they requested that rain should not be sent, since rain would have made it more difficult to conduct the ceremony on the following day.

On the third day, half of the *tohunga* went to collect the *pātai* and his guard, together with the worshippers. One of them chanted a *karakia* to the rising sun, dedicating it to *Kahukura*. They also blew several blasts on a conch-shell trumpet to awaken the villagers. The *pātai* and his guard then led a ceremonial procession to the *pae*. The box containing the *whakapakoko* of *Kahukura* was then retrieved from the bush, and the *whakapakoko* was



removed and placed on the altar. After further preliminary rituals, the *pātai* declared the purpose of the ceremony to *Kahukura*, and the guard instructed the worshippers to follow suit.

The plea was then repeated with increasing intensity, the *whakapakoko* taking centre stage of the proceedings. Holding the *whakapakoko* in his hand, the *pātai* swung it about, pointing it at the sky. As he did so, he entered a trance-like state. The *atua* was then believed to have taken over his body. The other *tohunga* also entered a state of possession, and the worshippers, by then in a frenzied state, screamed out the original question to *Kahukura*.

The four pieces of divining bark then came into play. Cast onto the ground by the *pātai*, the way they fell and the patterns they made, together with the ‘behaviour’ of the *whakapakoko*, was divined as *Kahukura*’s response. When one piece fell on top of another, it was understood as a blessing from the *atua*, and the *tohunga* would kiss the ground. All four pieces of bark falling with their white inner sides up was a good sign, but not a definitive ‘yes’ to the question being asked of the *atua*. Three white inner sides and one brown outer side was an uncertain answer, and meant that the question should be repeated. Two whites and two browns was a clear ‘yes’; three browns and one white was a bad omen, to be taken as a warning. Four brown outer sides was the worst omen, indicating a ‘no’, and was a sign of death. It was deemed that Māui (a Polynesian mythological hero) was calling from the underworld, which the *atua* was indicating with a bad omen.

According to Robinson’s description, the *whakapakoko* appeared to move about in a restless manner as if of its own accord. If the *whakapakoko* fell forwards, that was a good sign. If it fell backwards, that was bad. If all the signs were unclear, then a human sacrifice – a slave – was required. But Robinson is unclear whether this happened at the ceremony he attended. There are places where his account seems to be a mixture of his own experience and more general practices of the past.

The ceremony continued until a clear answer to the question asked was received. One of the *tohunga* then slapped the *pātai* on the back of the head to awaken him from his trance, and the *tohunga* playing the role of the guard drew the ceremony to a close. The *whakapakoko* was then placed back on the altar, and the worshippers, leaning forward and falling down in worship, brought offerings and sacrifices, including slaughtered animals, food, feathers, ornaments, and finely woven cloth. Some worshippers shed blood by cutting themselves.

When the *pātai* considered that sufficient worship had been offered, he repeated a *karakia*:

O great *Kahukura*, our god,  
and your family of gods,  
here is your feast and offerings.

May the worshippers be dismissed,  
 let us become *noa* (free) from the sacred (*tapu*).  
 There is life in *te ao mārama* (world of life and light, this world).

*Māori Karakia, in TRAK p.175*

The proceedings were now drawn to a close. Leaving the offerings at the *pae*, the guard *tohunga* led the people away, and they returned silently to their village. The *whakapakoko* was wrapped up and replaced in its box, which was returned to its hiding place in the flax bush. The rocks were removed, and the *tūāhu* (altar) was hidden. Some young men were instructed to return to the *pae* and collect the food, which was cooked and eaten, ending the period of *tapu*. The intended purpose in doing so was to pass on the blessings of the *atua* to the people. Following this, the occasion developed into a joyous festival, with songs, games, dancing, and so forth.

Robinson adds that there are several ways to perform the *pātai-atua* ceremony, and a number of variations can be added by an experienced *tohunga*. Sometimes, preparations for the ceremony could last for a month. When an urgent answer was required from the *atua*, perhaps due to the advance of an inimical tribe, the ceremony itself could be reduced to less than three days. Other divining methods were also used, such as the careful plucking of a blade of vegetation from a nearby tussock. If the blade broke midway down the stem, that was a bad omen: a negative outcome to the problem was presumed, and the ritual would be brought to an end. If the blade came out with some root attached, the omen was good. Knots were also tied in the blade: if it broke when the knot was tied, it was a bad omen, and the ritual could again be brought to an end. During these proceedings, the auxiliary *tohunga* chanted the name of the *atua*.

See also: **whakapakoko rākau, whakatoro.**

1. For these and other details, see Samuel Timoti Robinson, *Tohunga, TRAK* pp.169–79.

**pāṭh(a)** (S/H/Pu) *Lit.* recital, reading, perusal, study, lecture, lesson; recitation or study, especially of sacred or spiritual texts; common in Hindu and Sikh temples, and at other religious events such as marriages, the birthdays of past saints, and so on; hence, *pāṭhī*, one who reads, recites or chants from the sacred scriptures.

Mystics observe that in spiritual life, although recitation when performed with devotion is useful for creating a spiritual atmosphere and tendency in the mind, it cannot of itself lead to release of the soul from *māyā* (illusion) or spiritual enlightenment:

Through ritual actions (*āchārī*),  
 God cannot be won over;  
 By reciting (*pāṭh*) sacred scriptures,  
 His value cannot be estimated.  
 The eighteen *Purāṇas* and the four *Vedas*  
 do not know His mystery.  
 O Nānak, the true *guru* has shown me the Lord God.

*Guru Nānak, Ādi Granth 355, AGK*

See also: **japa** (8.5).

**pāy kōftan** (P) *Lit.* foot (*pāy*) stamping (*kōftan*); dance, especially when associated with *samāʿ* (Sufi music); a symbol of the inner ‘dance’ of the divinely intoxicated soul. In the metaphorical language of Sufis such as Rūmī, the inspiration of divine love makes every soul and every particle of creation ‘dance’ from divine Nonexistence into created existence, from the eternal Essence into created being. This cosmic dance permeates all creation. Every creature and every atom of creation, called into being by the ecstatic music of divine love, stamps its feet, waves its arms, claps its hands and whirls about in the cosmic dance of creation. Speaking of his master, Shams-i Tabrīz, as the minstrel who plays this divine “Melody”, the “one of handsome cheek”, he writes:

Once again a Melody has come  
 from the reed pipe of good fortune:  
 O soul, clap your hands; O heart, stamp your feet (*ba-kōb pāy*).  
 A mine has become aglow, a world is laughing,  
 a table is adorned, acclamation is coming.  
 We are drunk and roaring in hope of spring upon the meadow,  
 adoring one of handsome cheek.  
 He is the sea, we are a cloud –  
 he the treasure, we a ruin;  
 In the light of a sea, we are as motes.

*Rūmī, Divān-i Shams-i Tabrīz 2967:31487–90, KSD6 p.210, MP2 (384:1–4) p.132*

Likewise, Ḥāfiẓ begs his master to ‘play’ the inner Melody of the “lute (*ūd*)”, so that the souls of the devotees may become divinely intoxicated:

Since a lovely lute (*ūd*) lies at hand,  
 sing a sweet tune, O minstrel.  
 So that waving our hands (*dast afshāndan*) with songs of love,  
 we will stamp our feet (*pā kōftan*) and roll our heads.

*Ḥāfiẓ, Divān, DHA p.170, DIH p.293; cf. in SSE1 p.176*

External “foot stamping” or dance has been defined by some Sufis, such as ‘Irāqī,<sup>1</sup> as a symbol of *tawājjud* (imitative ecstasy), the attempt to experience ecstasy by external means. Such ecstasy is generally shallow, as well as impermanent.<sup>2</sup>

See also: **dast afshāndan** (8.1), **muṭrib** (7.1), **tawājjud** (8.1), **‘ūd** (3.2).

1. ‘Irāqī, *Iṣṭilāḥāt*, *RLRI* p.87, in *SSEI* p.176.

2. *Mir’āt-i ‘Ushshāq*, in *TAT* p.181, in *SSEI* p.176.

**penance** Self-punishment undertaken voluntarily to atone for a sin, crime and so on, arising from a feeling of regret for wrongdoing; penitence; austerities practised in order to overcome bodily desires and human weaknesses; in Christianity, a prayer, fasting, keeping vigils, wearing a hair shirt, *etc.*; such a punishment imposed by a Church authority as a condition of absolution; in Catholicism, the fourth sacrament, believed to have been instituted by Christ, invoking the divine grace by which repentant sinners are absolved of sin after confession to a priest and on performing a prescribed penance – a sacrament popularly known as confession, reconciliation, or penance.

As in many other matters, the early centuries of Christianity exhibited a wide diversity of practice and opinion concerning the power of the Church to forgive sins, and the means and extent by which it could do so. Likewise, there were variations in the system of penances imposed. In some instances, serious sinners were excluded from holy communion until their repentance had been demonstrated by penance such as fasting, public humiliation, wearing sackcloth, and other austerities. The treatment of capital sins (murder, adultery, apostasy) also varied. In some cases, good standing in the Church was permanently lost, and penance and forgiveness for such sins was not always available, though the sinner could still be forgiven by God. Some believed that capital sins could be forgiven only once, a relapse resulting in permanent loss of good standing. Others believed that some sins were altogether beyond forgiveness; yet others maintained that no sin committed after baptism could be forgiven.

From the latter part of the fourth century onwards, the involvement of a priest in the forgiveness of sins was actively discussed and promoted by influential Christian fathers such as Augustine (*d.*430), Ambrose (*d.*397), Athanasius (*d.*373), John Chrysostom (*d.*407), and Cyril of Alexandria (*d.*447). Those who maintained that only God could forgive sins, and that priests could have no part in it, were declared heretics. But it was not until the early Middle Ages that the current form of the sacrament was established by papal decree, with the confession of sins to an ordained priest, the apportionment of an appropriate penance, and the promise of divine absolution and

forgiveness of sins. In Christianity's earliest years, the public confession of sins in congregation had been prevalent. Even as late as the sixteenth century, confession to a layman was acceptable, supported by no less an authority than Martin Luther. There was also considerable discussion, punctuated by papal edicts, as to which sins needed confession.

Understandably, the doctrine of penance and the forgiveness of sins has been subject to considerable criticism both from within the Church and from nonbelievers; and Catholic thinkers are quick to correct the common misunderstanding that forgiveness is available simply by the asking. Catholic doctrine stresses that penance is not simply a human invention to relieve troubled consciences or to secure power over individuals; nor does the priest himself have the power to forgive sins; nor are sins forgiven by their mere confession. Firstly, a penitent must have received the sacrament of baptism. Divine forgiveness then requires the penitent's confession and sincere regret, the desire to make amends, and a firm commitment not to make the same mistake again. He is also expected to hate and detest his sins. Only when these conditions have been met is it believed that the sacrament of penance facilitates the divine mercy and consequent forgiveness of sins. Then, no amount of sin, however serious, is deemed beyond the power of the sacrament. Penance, therefore, does not constitute permission to commit sin. A penitent cannot, as with a worldly credit agency, run up a monthly debt, which is paid off as a matter of routine.

Catholic theologians have not been able to arrive at any consensus of opinion as to how the process of absolution actually takes place. Though not crystallized as dogma or doctrine, it is generally believed that since human repentance is rarely one hundred percent sincere, the sacrament is essentially a means by which God is graceful towards human imperfection. In the Reformation, the efficacy of this sacrament was largely rejected in a return to the belief that God alone can forgive sins.<sup>1</sup>

The justification for belief in the efficacy of the sacrament is said to be a passage from John's gospel, where the risen Jesus speaks to his disciples:

Then said Jesus to them again, "Peace be unto you: just as my Father has sent me, even so do I send you." And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and said unto them, "Receive the Holy Ghost: those whose sins you remit, they are remitted; and those whose sins you retain, they are retained."

*John 20:21–23; cf. KJV*

However, as in so many places in the gospels, Jesus is talking to his disciples, not to future generations. Non-Catholics do not consider the passage as referring to the sacrament of penance, nor even to the confession of sins to a priest. Moreover, *John*, chapters twenty and twenty-one, are generally reckoned by

impartial scholars to be later additions to the original text, added to justify the beliefs and concerns of later Christianity. Various other gospel texts are similarly drawn into the argument, which are then analysed theologically and intellectually to prove the predetermined point.<sup>2</sup>

The actual practice of the sacrament of penance is often far removed from the lofty theological ideals and concepts upon which it is based. In many cases, confessions are made half-heartedly and as a matter of routine, with a minimum of personal insight, while the priest hands out a few ‘Our Fathers’ and ‘Hail Marys’, advising the penitent to improve his or her ways. But the reality is that for average human beings, spiritual life is a struggle against ingrained habits, and there is every likelihood that the individual will go on in much the same way as before.

The sacrament of penance or confession is distinct from penance as physical austerities, and a few words may be added on the subject. In the past, when penances, austerities and mortification of the body were deemed an integral aspect of the religious life, many went to zealous extremes in the attempt to quell their bodily desires and human failings. Yet focusing on the negative only serves to increase its power, and a person can easily become self-obsessed, and proud of their ability to endure hardship – traits that lead away from humility and the love of God. As Walter Hilton observes:

Some people strain and torture their unhappy bodies with harsh penance all their lives, and are constantly reciting prayers, psalms and other devotions, but never come to feel the love of God in their souls, while others seem to do so in a short time and with less strain. The reason is that the former lack this humility of which I speak.

*Walter Hilton, Ladder of Perfection 2:20, LPH pp.153–54*

John of the Cross adds:

One must greatly lament the ignorance of certain men, who burden themselves with extraordinary penances and with many other voluntary practices, and think that this practice or that is sufficient to bring them into union with divine Wisdom; but such will not be the case if they endeavour not diligently to mortify their desires. If they were careful to bestow half of that labour on this, they would profit more in a month than they profit by all the other practices in many years.

*John of the Cross, Ascent of Mount Carmel 1:8.4; cf. CWJC1 pp.40–41*

Or as the Spanish priest and mystic Juan Falconi (1596–1638) puts it bluntly: “To serve God there is no need to go killing oneself with fasts and penances.”<sup>3</sup>

In this respect, the asceticism of the desert fathers of old had mixed results. Some struggled all their lives to little avail. Others worked through

the downside of asceticism, and found the peace and love of God. It was, perhaps, more a matter of the temperament with which they were born, than the effect of self-inflicted penance and hardship.

The underlying motivations for penance, as a worldwide, cross-cultural phenomenon, are also worth considering. To want to make amends for wrongdoing is an interesting facet of human psychology, demonstrating an innate understanding of right and wrong. Even in the criminal justice system, those who feel no remorse are treated more harshly than those who are repentant. Likewise, the desire to overcome the bodily nature by physical mortification reflects the inherent desire of the soul to escape its corporeal prison, though the means adopted may not achieve that end.

See also: **austerities** (8.5), **teshuvah** (►4).

1. See “penance,” *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 2001; “The sacrament of penance,” *Catholic Encyclopedia*, 1911.
2. E.g. *Mark* 2:5–11; *Matthew* 9:2–7, 18:18, 16:19.
3. Juan Falconi, *Straight Road to Heaven*, *OJF2* p.455, in *SSM2* p.302.

**Pentecost** (Gk. *Pentēkostē*) The Christian festival, held on the fiftieth day after Easter, celebrating the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles and over a hundred other disciples of Jesus, when they were celebrating the Jewish Feast of Weeks (*Shavu'ot*) in Jerusalem, according to the story related in *Acts*;<sup>1</sup> also called White Sunday or Whitsun; from the Greek *pentēkostē* (fiftieth). The celebrations and observances associated with the festival vary between the many Christian Churches. Pentecost or *Shavu'ot* is the Jewish festival marking the completion of fifty days after Passover (He. *Pesah*).

According to the story related in *Acts*:

And when the day of Pentecost (*Pentēkostē*) was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because every man heard them speak in his own language.

*Acts* 2:1–6; cf. *KJV*

Like many biblical stories, the authenticity of the tale is doubtful, and there is no corroboration of it from any other source. Nonetheless, the traditional element of a “sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind” is probably a significant feature. The sounds of wind<sup>2</sup> or thunder<sup>3</sup> and the manifestation of fire are common motifs in the Hebrew Bible, used to denote the ‘Voice’ and presence of God. There is the incident when God appeared to Moses “in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed.”<sup>4</sup> Similarly, when God appeared to Moses on Mt Sinai, He “descended upon it in fire”,<sup>5</sup> while to the assembled Israelites, the “glory of the Lord looked like a consuming fire”.<sup>6</sup> In other instances, in accordance with the tradition of burnt offerings, God appears as fire to consume sacrificial offerings placed upon an altar,<sup>7</sup> or as an angel who likewise causes the sacrifice to be consumed by fire.<sup>8</sup> It is in the context of these antecedents that the story of Pentecost needs to be understood.

It is also possible that the anecdote may have been derived from an earlier, lost stratum of Jesus’ teaching in which the “house where they were sitting” referred to the bodily house or temple within which the mystic sound was heard. Similarly, the “tongues like as of fire” could have been a reference to the inner flame or light described by mystics of all ages and cultures. It is certainly true that the mystic sound and fire would have “filled (the disciples) with the Holy Ghost”, which would have been accompanied by a “sound from heaven”. But it would have been an inner sound and an inner heaven, not an outer sound from the physical sky. The turning of the mystical and the esoteric into the mythological and exoteric is a part of the externalization of mystic teachings that is common to probably all world religions.

Some Christian mystics have indeed understood the story as a metaphorical description of an inner experience. Nikētas Stēthatos, a monk of the Greek Orthodox tradition, writes that if you should steep yourself in purity and stillness, abandoning the realm of “material perception”, you will become “receptive to the rays of the Spirit” to such an extent that you can “receive the Paraclete in tongues of fire in the upper chamber of your stillness”. The “Paraclete” is the spiritual form of Jesus (the “divine *Logos*”), as described in John’s gospel,<sup>9</sup> while the “upper chamber” refers to the deep concentration of spiritual contemplation where this form is encountered:

If you generate the honey of the virtues in stillness, you will through struggle and self-discipline transcend the lowly estate of man’s fallen condition and . . . restore the soul’s powers to their natural state. Your heart purified by tears, you will now become receptive to the rays of the Spirit, and will clothe yourself in the incorruption of the life-quickenning deathly state of Christ<sup>10</sup> and will receive the Paraclete in tongues of fire in the upper chamber of your stillness. . . .



If ... you have heard the words, "Arise, let us go hence,"<sup>11</sup> and if, in answer to the master's call, you lay aside assiduous labour and stop eating the bread of pain, repudiating merely material perception, then – tasting the bowl of God's wisdom – you will know that Christ is the Lord. For, having fulfilled the law of the commandments by ministering to the divine *Logos*, you will have ascended into the upper chamber and will be awaiting the coming of the Paraclete.

*Nikētas Stēthatos, On the Inner Nature of Things 66, 84,  
Philokalia; cf. PCT4 pp.126, 131*

Walter Hilton, on the other hand, understands the experiences of Pentecost as actual experiences, but points out that they are only in the "imagination, and therefore are not spiritual". He goes on to say that some have a greater reality than others, some being "genuine" while others are entirely "illusory". He is saying that both are projections of the mind, but some are complete fabrications while others have some basis in reality. Nevertheless, he does not decry such experiences, but observes that they are at best only reflections of the real, "invisible" Spirit or Holy Ghost:

The same may be said of other experiences of a physical nature, such as hearing sweet music, sensations of pleasant bodily warmth, seeing light, or enjoying sweet flavours. These are not spiritual experiences, for spiritual experiences are felt in the powers of the soul, chiefly in the understanding and will, and very little in the imagination. But such experiences are in the imagination, and therefore are not spiritual. Even when good and genuine they are only outward manifestations of the inward grace experienced in the powers of the soul. This can be clearly proved in holy Scripture, where it is said that the Holy Spirit appeared to the apostles on the Day of Pentecost in the form of tongues of fire, and inflamed their hearts, resting upon each of them.

Now it is evident that the Holy Spirit, who is the invisible God Himself, was not to be identified with the tongues of fire nor the sensation of bodily heat; but He was invisibly felt in the powers of their souls, for He enlightened their understanding and kindled their affection by His blessed presence so clearly and ardently that they suddenly possessed the spiritual knowledge of truth and the perfection of love, as our Lord had promised them when He said: "The Holy Spirit shall teach you all truth."<sup>12</sup>

The fire and the heat, therefore, were no more than material signs and evidences of the grace inwardly experienced. And as it was with the Apostles, so it is with other souls that are visited and enlightened by the Holy Spirit, and enjoy sensible feelings of consolation as a pledge of interior grace. I do not think that this favour is granted to

all perfect souls, but only to those to whom our Lord wills to give it. Other souls as yet imperfect may experience these sensations without having received the interior grace, but it is not good for them to depend overmuch on these sensations. Let them rather make use of them insofar as they help the soul to a more constant recollection of God and to a deeper love of Him. For, as I have already said, these sensations may sometimes be genuine and sometimes illusory.

Walter Hilton, *Ladder of Perfection* 2:30; cf. *LPH* pp.191–92

1. *Acts* 2:1–31.
2. E.g. *Psalms* 18:10, 104:3; *Job* 38:1.
3. E.g. *Exodus* 19:16, 20:18; *Psalms* 93:4; *Jeremiah* 10:13; *Job* 26:14, 37:4–5, 40:9; etc.
4. *Exodus* 3:2.
5. *Exodus* 19:18; cf. *Deuteronomy* 4:11–12, 15, 33, 36.
6. *Exodus* 24:17; cf. *Deuteronomy* 5:24.
7. *Leviticus* 9:23–24.
8. *Judges* 6:19–24, 13:15–20.
9. *John* 14:16–26, 15:26, 16:7–14.
10. Cf. *1 Corinthians* 15:53; *2 Corinthians* 4:10.
11. *John* 14: 31.
12. *John* 16:13.

**Pesaḥ** (He), **Pascha** (Gk) *Lit.* passed over; Passover; the Jewish holiday commemorating the exodus of the early Israelites from slavery in Egypt, under the leadership of the prophet Moses in approximately 1300 BCE.

The story of the Israelites' servitude to their Egyptian masters and their subsequent liberation is told in the Hebrew Bible, in the books of *Exodus*, *Leviticus*, *Numbers*, and *Deuteronomy*. The dramatic story of their exodus and subsequent wanderings in the Sinai desert for forty years culminates in the revelation of the Ten Commandments and the *Torah* (the first five books of the Bible) on Mount Sinai. To commemorate this history, the *Torah* mandates three annual festivals ("Three times a year all your menfolk must present themselves before the Lord *Yahweh*"), which are to be marked by offerings of the first fruits of the agricultural harvest, including certain animal sacrifices, and offerings of grain and oil.<sup>1</sup> The three festivals are: *Pesaḥ*; *Sukkot* (Tabernacles, Shelters), which commemorates the desert wanderings and divine protection; and *Shavu'ot* ('Feast of Weeks') or Pentecost ('fiftieth'), which falls fifty days after the first day of *Pesaḥ*, and which commemorates the revelation of the *Torah*.<sup>2</sup> Nowadays, since there is no longer a central Jerusalem temple, nor any animal sacrifices or agricultural offerings, each holiday is celebrated with specific prayers, readings from the Bible, and other liturgy.

*Pesah* (passed over) refers to the last of the ten plagues described in the Bible, with which Pharaoh and the Egyptians were punished for their oppression of the Hebrew slaves. An Egyptian decree had dictated that male Hebrew children should be put to death, to prevent a future uprising. The tenth plague inflicted by God on the Egyptians was that the angel of death would smite the firstborn male children of the Egyptians and ‘pass over’ the homes of the Hebrew slaves, leaving their sons alive.<sup>3</sup>

Details of the various festivals to be observed in the Jewish calendar are further stipulated in *Leviticus*. Regarding the celebration of *Pesah*, *Leviticus* instructs:

The fourteenth day of the first month, between the two evenings, is the Passover (*Pesah*) of *Yahweh*; and the fifteenth day of the same month is the Feast of Unleavened Bread for *Yahweh*. For seven days you must eat bread without leaven. On the first day, you must hold a sacred assembly; you must do no heavy work. For seven days you must offer a burnt offering to *Yahweh*. The seventh day is to be a day of sacred assembly; you must do no heavy work.

*Leviticus 23:5–8; cf. JB*

The *Pesah* holiday begins on the fifteenth day of the Hebrew month of *Nisan* (roughly corresponding to the springtime period of April/May in the northern hemisphere), and lasts for seven days in Israel (eight in the diaspora). A unique ritual of the *Pesah* holiday is the *Seder* (order), a meal held on the first night of the holiday, which is interwoven with a liturgy of prayers and scriptural passages commemorating God’s compassion and mercy in freeing the Israelites from oppression.

The entire *Seder* ritual is outlined in a special prayer book known as the *Haggadah* (‘telling’). One of the first readings is put in the form of four questions that ask why *Pesah* is different from all other nights. The purpose of including this in the *Seder* was probably to focus the minds of the participants on the sacred nature of the proceedings and to stimulate the interest of their children in the ritual. Following this there is a section concerning the four types of sons who ask about the events of the exodus, each of whom requires a different kind of answer. One is wise, one is evil, one is dull, and one does not even know what to ask. This sets the pattern for the types of answers given to participants in the *Seder*. Four cups of wine are drunk at particular moments in the service. Specific and symbolic foods are also eaten: fresh vegetables to mark the Spring season of renewal; salt water to symbolize the tears of the slaves; horseradish or other bitter herbs to symbolize the harshness of the slaves’ lives, and so on. Included among the symbolic foods is the *zero’a* (shankbone), which is not eaten but is pointed out. It commemorates the paschal sacrifice that would have taken place in the Jerusalem Temple.

*Mazah*, a flat unleavened bread, is eaten throughout the entire festival to symbolize the haste with which the Israelites fled from Egypt. Since the Egyptian soldiers were pursuing them, they did not have the opportunity to bake leavened bread. In fact, any leaven or yeast, as well as fermented foods in general, are avoided during the entire holiday period. Fermentation symbolizes impurity, and the purpose of the holiday is purification.

An empty chair is normally left at the table for the prophet Elijah, who, according to the story recounted in 2 *Kings*, is believed to have ascended bodily to heaven.<sup>4</sup> With the passage of time, Elijah has come to be regarded as the one who intercedes with God on behalf of the suffering and oppressed, and is a precursor to the messianic age. Elijah represents salvation and liberation. At a certain point during the ritual meal, the door is opened and those in attendance sing a song of welcome to Elijah, based on a passage in 1 *Kings*:<sup>5</sup> “Elijah the prophet, Elijah the Tishbite, Elijah the Giladite – in haste and in our days may he come to us with the messiah, son of David.” The song concludes with: “Happy is he who has seen Elijah’s face in a dream.”

Although four cups of wine are drunk by participants at the meal, an additional large cup of wine is placed on the table, and is referred to as Elijah’s cup. No one drinks from Elijah’s cup; all at the table watch it carefully to see if Elijah has entered the home (in spirit) and has taken a sip. He symbolizes hope for the messianic redemption and return to Jerusalem.

Reading passages from the *Haggadah*, participants at the *Seder* retell the story of the exodus, and also create original interpretations of how it is echoed in modern life. *Pesah* is hence considered a holiday of freedom on many levels – freedom for the soul from its worldly encumbrances and impurities, its lower tendencies and negative habits, as well as freedom from many national and global social ills, including all forms of worldly oppression.

Concerning the moral lessons to be derived from the celebration of both *Pesah* and *Sukkot* (‘Feast of Tabernacles’), the twelfth-century Jewish philosopher Moses Maimonides writes:

The two festivals, Passover and the Feast of Tabernacles, imply also the teaching of certain truths and certain moral lessons. Passover teaches us to remember the miracles which God wrought in Egypt, and to perpetuate their memory; the Feast of Tabernacles reminds us of the miracles wrought in the wilderness. The moral lesson derived from these feasts is this: man ought to remember the bad times in his days of prosperity. He will thereby be induced to thank God repeatedly, and to lead a modest and humble life. We eat, therefore, unleavened bread and bitter herbs on Passover in memory of what happened unto us, and leave our houses (on *Sukkot*) in order to dwell in tabernacles, as inhabitants of deserts do who are in want of comfort.

*Moses Maimonides, Guide of the Perplexed 43; cf. GPM p.353*

Philo Judaeus, a first-century Greek-speaking Jewish philosopher of Alexandria, writes of the spiritual symbolism of *Pesah*. He views it as representing “the passage from the life of the passions to the practice of virtue”, passing from enslavement to the senses and evil inclinations to a life of service to God:

Let us then say nay to all hesitation, and present ourselves ever up-girded and ready to give thanks and honour to the Almighty. For we are bidden to keep the Passover (Gk. *Pascha*), which is the passage from the life of the passions to the practice of virtue, “with our loins girded” ready for service. We must grip the material body of flesh, that is the sandals, with “our feet”, that stand firm and sure. We must bear “in our hands the staff” of discipline, to the end that we may walk without stumbling through all the business of life. Last of all we must eat our meal “in haste”.<sup>6</sup> For it is no mortal passage, since it is called the Passover (Gk. *Pascha*) of the Uncreated and Immortal One. And right fitly is it so called, for there is no good thing which is not divine and is not of God.

*Philo Judaeus, On the Sacrifices of Abel and Cain 17, PCW2 pp.142–43*

Adin Steinsaltz, a contemporary rabbi and mystic, writes in *The Thirteen-Petalled Rose* concerning the spiritual significance of these holidays for all Jews at various times in history:

These holy festivals are not intended simply as memorial days to keep alive the memory of the events; they are divinely appointed times dedicated to a renewal of the same revelation that once occurred on that day in the year, a repetition and a restoration of the same forces. So that the sanctity of the holidays is derived not only from a primal divine revelation, but also from Israel’s (Jewish) continual resanctification, in the way it keeps these days holy, of this revelation.

*Adin Steinsaltz, The Thirteen-Petalled Rose, TPRS p.58*

And:

The annual cycle goes from Passover, the memorial day for the beginning of the life of the soul and for the life of the nation, through the feast of *Shavu’ot*, the time of overcoming resistance and obstacles and the commemoration of the receiving of the *Torah*, which is the standing forth before the Supreme, until the feast of *Sukkot*, which is the time of ripening and maturity and reward.

*Adin Steinsaltz, The Thirteen-Petalled Rose, TPRS p.120*

See also: **Pentecost**.

1. *Exodus* 23:14–19.
2. See *Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Shabbat* 87b.
3. *Exodus* 11:1–12:36.
4. *2 Kings* 2:8–12.
5. *1 Kings* 17:1.
6. *Exodus* 12:11.

**pichchhī** (S), **piñchhī** (Pk) *Lit.* a small fan-shaped whisk broom, made of naturally shed peacock feathers attached to a handle and carried by *Digambara* monks and advanced laypeople to sweep the ground before them as they walk or where they intend to sit, in order to remove and thus avoid harming tiny creatures; similar to the *Shvetāmbara*, white-wool, whisk broom, known as a *rajoharaṇa*.<sup>1</sup>

See also: **rajoharaṇa**.

1. See “piñchī,” *A to Z of Jainism*, AZJW.

**Pihta** (Md) *Lit.* the opened or the revealed; a Mandaean term for the ‘holy bread’ used in a sacrament similar to the Christian Eucharist; equivalent to the Bread of Heaven, the Bread of Life, or the *manna* of Christian and Jewish terminology; mystically, God’s opening, emanation or revelation of Himself in the act of creation; hence, His creative power or divine Word. In Mandaean ritual, the *pihta* is consumed along with *mambuha* (bubbling spring), the sacramental water, analogous to the bread and water or, later, the bread and wine of the Eucharist.

Speaking of *Yawar-Ziwa* (‘Father of Radiance’), chief of the ‘*uthras* (pure spiritual beings) and one of the pantheon of Mandaean saviours, a Mandaean poet writes:

He arose and broke Bread (*Pihta*) in secret  
and gave thereof to the sons of men,  
and established his abode in secret.

*Mandaean Prayer Book 38, CPM p.38*

Giving the Bread of the Word to the “sons of men” “in secret” means that the saviour establishes a secret or hidden dwelling within the soul. As a result, the soul can enjoy true communion with him in his eternal abode. As another text says:

He who partakes of this Bread (*Pihta*) put out for him,  
will be sinless in the place of light, the everlasting abode.

*Mandaean Prayer Book 43; cf. CPM p.40*

Like Jesus' Bread of Heaven,<sup>1</sup> this Bread cleanses the soul of all past sins.

Most significant among the Mandaean writings on this subject is an allegory 'told' by the pure "white *Pihta*" itself, where it is clearly symbolic of the Word as the divine Bread of Heaven. The pure *Pihta* tells of its degradation (in the minds of men) from pure mystic essence to the bread of this world, where it is taken as physical food – "fodder for beasts" – and eaten in religious ceremony.

In the poem, of which there are several variants,<sup>2</sup> the divine Word comes to this world "as food for Adam and his sons", that is, as spiritual sustenance for human beings. This symbolizes the coming of a saviour to the world. The first few generations understand and follow his teachings, without externalizing and perverting them. But after that, misunderstanding creeps in, and things are "omitted" and "subtracted" from the teachings.

In general, it is a simple and explicit tale of the degeneration of a mystic's teachings concerning the Word, the Living Bread, into a religion. The "Seven", a common Mandaean term appearing in this allegory, refers to the five planets as they were known at that time, plus the sun and moon. They are an astrological reference used to refer metaphorically to the powers of destiny:

White *Pihta* am I!  
A creature of light, I came into existence.  
*Pihta* am I, the white,  
for *Yawar* was my transplanter.  
My creator was *Yawar*:  
from His treasury He brought me. . . .  
He took me, brought me down,  
set me down in the earthly world,  
as food for Adam and all his sons.

While the first generation existed,  
they ate me in good faith:  
in good faith did they eat me;  
No trickery did they perform with me:  
they performed with me no misuse.  
Nor did they omit or subtract from me:  
they committed no omission or subtraction,  
and the creatures of the Seven had no dominion over me.

When a second generation came into being,  
 they too ate me aright:  
 sincerely did they eat me.  
 No trickery did they perform with me:  
 they performed me with no crooked dealing.  
 They did not omit or subtract from me:  
 from me they neither omitted nor subtracted,  
 and the creatures of the Seven had no power over me.

When a third generation arose,  
*Adonai* ('my Lord') built a house,  
 a house did *Adonai* build,  
 and the Seven obtained a hold in it.  
 Then it was dispersed  
 among the three hundred and sixty two nations.  
 And then I was taken from their midst and they cast me  
 among the three hundred and sixty-two nations.

Then they ate me with falsehood:  
 with falsehood did they eat me.  
 Wrongly did they use me:  
 they used me falsely.  
 And did with me that which was deficient and lacking:  
 that which was deficient and lacking they did with me,  
 and creatures of the Seven gained dominion over me.

Then strength was taken from me,  
 and radiance, order, taste and glory,  
 and they made me fodder for beasts.  
 Souls departed from their bodies without their due measure.

*Mandaean Prayer Book 353; cf. CPM pp.244–45*

The pure "white *Pihta*", the Living Bread of which mystics speak, the creative power of the divine Word, is ultimately replaced by physical bread, eaten by the mouth, "fodder for beasts" – food for human beings so lacking in true spirituality that they have become like beasts.

When the teachings of a mystic are misunderstood, which by human nature they are bound to be, they become debased, ending up as food for "beasts" – the source of all manner of justification for human imperfection and external religious practice. Then, all the "strength ... radiance, order, taste and glory" is "taken from" the teachings; and souls who come to this world and put their faith in the religions that have formed around them, leave



the world without taking with them the true spiritual inheritance (“their due measure”) that is the human birthright.

See also: **Bread** (3.1), **Eucharist**, **manṇa** (3.1).

1. *John* 6:32–35.
2. *Mandaean Prayer Book* 352, 354–55, *CPM* pp.243–44, 247–50.

**piṇḍapātra** (S/Pa), **bsod snyoms** (T), **qīshí** (C), **kotsujiki** (J) *Lit.* food morsel (*piṇḍa*) + fall (*pāta*); food-morsel dropping; the fall of food into an alms bowl; alms round; the round made by a monk to collect alms in his alms bowl (*pātra*); of uncertain etymology; also, by extension, the food received in the bowl and the bowl itself; one of the four primary needs (*nishraya*) of a monk, viz. the base of a tree (*vṛiksha-mūla*) for a dwelling, alms food (*piṇḍapātra*) for nourishment, rejected rags from a rubbish heap (*pāṃsukūla*) for garments, and cow’s urine for medicine (*pūtimukta-bhaishajya*).

See also: **piṇḍapātra**, **takuhatsu**.

**piṇḍapātra**, **pātra** (S), **patta** (Pa), **lhung bzed** (T), **bō** (C), **hachi** (J) *Lit.* food (*piṇḍa*) bowl (*pātra*); alms bowl (*pātra*, *patta*); a bowl (*bzed*) into which food is dropped (*lhung*); a bowl used by Buddhist monks, nuns, novices and female probationers to collect their daily alms; given at the time of the lower or preliminary ordination, along with three robes. The begging bowl used by Jain *Shvetāmbara* monks and nuns is also known as a *pātra*. They are generally made of wood, pottery, or a hollowed-out gourd. Since Jain *Digambara* monks eat from the palms of their hands, they use no begging bowl.

According to the Buddhist *Vinaya* (monastic code), bowls should normally be made of either pottery or iron, and can vary in size – large, medium, or small.<sup>1</sup> There are also rules governing the receiving of food, and how and when it should be consumed. Different Buddhist schools, however, have evolved their own variations on the code. At the present time, for instance, monks in *Zen* monasteries generally use a set of nested, wooden bowls (*jihatsu*) and eat their food in a communal dining hall.

According to the Pali *Vinaya Piṭaka* (monastic code), the food must be given and eaten between dawn and midday, any other times being deemed the “wrong time”.<sup>2</sup> Alms food can consist of five types: cooked rice, baked or roasted flour, pulse and rice, fish, and meat.<sup>3</sup> Numerous other rules of behaviour concerning begging are laid down in the *Vinaya Piṭaka*. A monk, for example, should

receive *piṇḍapāta* attentively, ... only look into the bowl while receiving *piṇḍapāta*, ... receive curry in correct proportion to the rice, ... only receive *piṇḍapāta* until it reaches the rim of the bowl, ... eat *piṇḍapāta* attentively, ... not cover up curry or mix the curry with the rice in order to make it taste better, ... not look at another's bowl with envy, ... not make up very large mouthfuls of food, ... not put his fingers into his mouth when eating, ... not speak with his mouth full, ... not eat stuffing out his cheeks, ... not eat and shake (food particles off) his hands at the same time, ... not scatter grains of rice about so that they fall back into the bowl or elsewhere, ... not eat making a champing sound, ... not eat (or drink) making a sucking sound, ... not eat licking his hands, ... not eat scraping the bowl, ... not eat licking his lips, ... not take hold of a vessel of water with his hand soiled with food, ... not throw out bowl-washing water which has grains of rice in it in a place where there are dwellings.<sup>4</sup>

*Vinaya Piṭaka*, PTSV2 p.214; cf. BDV5 pp.300–1, CBBL p.422

Begging is a part of the monastic lifestyle, which requires minimum possessions in order to prevent attachment to things of the world and leave the mind free to focus on the spiritual life. The begging bowl is one of a few, essential, permitted possessions. Part of the rationale behind begging is that it inculcates humility in the monks, and at the same time gives the laity an opportunity to earn good *karma* and the consequential merit (*puṇya*). Monks may also teach the *Dharma* (Way, teachings) by reciting *sūtras* while begging.

Laypeople who have harmed or have been abusive to the *sangha* in any way, or have spoken ill of the Buddha or his *Dharma*, may be punished by the monastic community by refusing to accept their donations. This is known as *pātra-nikubjana* (S. upsetting the bowl). Only after such people have been reconciled to the *sangha* can they be reinstated as acceptable donors.

The bowls of revered Buddhist masters of all schools have often been used as relics and enshrined accordingly in stupas. In the Chinese *Chán* school, the transmission of the *dharma* lineage from master to appointed successor was symbolized by the passing of the begging bowl from master to disciple.

See also: **āhāra-dāna**, **bhikshu** (7.1), **gocharī**, **takuhatsu**.

1. E.g. *Vinaya Piṭaka*, *Cūlavagga*, PTSV2 p.112, BDV5 p.152; *Sutta Vibhanga*, PTSV3 p.243, BDV2 pp.115; PTSV4 p.123, BDV2 p.415; PTSV4 pp.243–44, BDV3 pp.213–14; *Parivāra*, PTSV5 p.118, BDV6 p.181.
2. E.g. *Vinaya Piṭaka*, PTSV5 p.36, PTSV4 p.85, BDV2 p.336.
3. *Vinaya Piṭaka*, PTSV5 p.191.
4. Cf. *Vinaya Piṭaka*, PTSV4 pp.190–92, PTSV5 pp.30–56.

**pippala** (S), **pīpal** (H) (*Ficus religiosa*) A tree of the fig family considered sacred by the Hindus, sometimes worshipped by making circuits around it, while making offerings, lighting lamps, and so on; generally anglicized as ‘pipal’ or ‘peepul’.

In the Jain tradition, which believes in complete *ahimsā* (non-violence, harmlessness) to other living beings, eating the fruit of the *pīpal* and some other trees such as the jackfruit, fig and banyan, is prohibited because they often contain tiny (invertebrate) life forms.

According to Buddhist tradition, the Buddha practised extreme austerities for six years, but found enlightenment elusive. Rejecting these practices as fruitless, he sat in meditation beneath a *pīpal* tree, where he received enlightenment. In acknowledgement of the event, the *pīpal* tree later became known as the *bodhi* (enlightenment) tree.

The origin of *pīpal* worship is possibly a misinterpretation of a mystical metaphor. In Sanskrit literature, the *pīpal* is called the *Ashvattha*, a mythological tree depicted in the *Bhagavad Gītā*,<sup>1</sup> the *Upanishads*, and other sacred texts. It is an inverted tree whose root symbolizes *Brahman* and whose branches form the creation:

There is an eternal *Ashvattha* tree:  
 its root above, its branches below.  
 It is the Resplendent, It is *Brahman*,  
 It alone is called the Immortal.  
 In It, are all the worlds contained –  
 beyond It, none can go.

*Kaṭha Upanishad 2:3.1*

Regarding the worship of the *pīpal* tree, Swami Shiv Dayal Singh says:

It is a pity that the supreme Lord and gracious Creator, who has created the world with all its beautiful forms and endowed man with this superior body, should be worshipped in metal and stone, in waters of rivers like Gangā, Yamunā, and Narmadā; in trees and plants like *pīpal* and *tulsī*; or in animals like cows, monkeys, and serpents. Obviously, the sun and the moon and man himself are superior to those things. Not to seek the true God, but to worship His creation as God Himself and to worship the things which man himself has made – how much does it speak for the negligence, ignorance, and carelessness of the people?

*Swami Shiv Dayal Singh, Sār Bachan Prose 35, SBAT pp.20–21*

It is because Indian mystics, especially of the past, have seen people trying to worship the Divine by such means that they have spoken out so frequently against external practices. It is not that the mystics are being negative. Because

such traditions and practices are so prevalent and deep-rooted in India, mystics have felt it necessary to speak in plain language in order to help people free themselves from superstitious worship. Then they can take up a practice that will genuinely benefit them and bring them into contact with God.

See also: **Ashvattha** (3.1).

1. *Bhagavad Gītā* 10:26, 15:1–4.

**pītāmbar(a)** (S/H) *Lit.* yellow (*pīta*) garment (*ambara*), yellow clothing; a saffron-coloured silk cloth, worn by Hindus at the time of auspicious religious ceremonies; also, saffron-robed, clad in yellow; said to be the special dress of *Vishṇu*; thus, an epithet of *Vishṇu*; also, a *sādhū* or religious mendicant wearing saffron-coloured garments.

As the colour of sacrifice, saffron also has a symbolic significance for Sikhs. In life or death situations, for example, the army would wear saffron turbans indicating their readiness to die. Among *sādhū*s, it is supposed to signify their readiness and intention to sacrifice the ego.

Kṛishṇa is commonly depicted as wearing the saffron robe:

Wearing the peacock crest, yellow silken robe (*pītāmbar*)  
and the chrysanthemum garland on the neck,  
the Enchanting One with the flute herds the cows in Vṛindāvan.

*Mīrābāī, Shabdāvalī, Mishrit ang, Shabd 19:3, MBS p.53, in SSII pp.184–85*

I behold *Gopāla*, the husband of *Rukmīṇī*,  
who wears the divine crown,  
and the shining yellow garment (*pītāmbara*),  
and the garland of pure pearls,  
who sports in diverse ways! –  
Who has an imperishable existence,  
who is the support of the celestial women and angels,  
who wears the *kaustubha* (a renowned jewel) on his neck,  
and dwells in the minds of his devotees!

*Nārāyaṇa Tīrtha, Songs of Devotion; cf. in SSII pp.250–51*

See also: **kunkuma**.

**pitṛipūjā** (S/H), **pitār pūjā** (Pu) *Lit.* worship (*pūjā*) of the fathers (*pitṛi*); worship of the ancestors; offering oblations to deceased ancestors. According to the Hindu tradition, a person is born with four debts or obligations. These are: to the

gods, to the *ṛishis* or holy men, to one's ancestors, and to one's fellow beings. These obligations are fulfilled, respectively, by worshipping the gods, studying the scriptures composed by the *ṛishis*, offering oblations to deceased ancestors, and being hospitable and charitably disposed towards one's fellow beings.

*Pitṛipūjā* also includes the traditional giving of alms and free meals, especially to the *brāhmaṇs*, to propitiate the gods and ameliorate the condition of one's dead relatives in their afterlife. Such beliefs are prevalent even at the present time.

A story is commonly related of Guru Nānak. On a visit to Hardwār, on the banks of the sacred Ganges, he saw some people throwing water towards the east. He asked them what they were doing. They replied, "We are making an offering to our departed ancestors in the next world."

Upon hearing this, the *guru* started throwing water towards the west. When asked why he was doing so, he replied, "I have a farm at Kartarpur, and am watering my fields there."

When the people laughed at his folly, he responded pointedly, "If your water can reach the next world, then it can certainly reach my fields in this world!" The people were silenced by his unanswerable reasoning.

Using a similar pithy logic, Kabīr points out that elderly people are often neglected when alive and worshipped after death:

He does not honour his ancestors (*pitar*) while they are alive,  
 but he holds feasts in their honour after they have died.  
 Tell me, how can his poor ancestors (*pitar*)  
 receive what the crows and the dogs have eaten up?  
 If only someone would tell me what real happiness is!  
 Speaking of happiness and joy, the world is perishing.  
 How can happiness be found?  
 Making gods and goddesses out of clay,  
 people sacrifice living beings to them.  
 Such are your dead ancestors (*pitar*),  
 who cannot ask for what they want.

*Kabīr, Ādi Granth 332, AGK*

Worship of ancestors has been prevalent in a number of other cultures, including the Egyptian and the Roman.

See also: **ancestor worship, shrāddha.**

**polytheism** A belief in many gods, as in Hinduism and the religions of ancient Greece, Egypt, Mesopotamia, and many of the world's indigenous peoples; the worship of many deities. In many polytheistic belief systems, there is

a supreme Deity, of whom all the lesser deities are regarded as creations, aspects or personifications, as in some phases of Hinduism and for some time in ancient Israel, in the cult of *Yahweh*. In other cases, one deity is ascendant over the others without being in a position of overall supremacy, as with *Zeus* in ancient Greece. Over time, the various deities of polytheistic religions also lose or gain prominence among worshippers.

Many mystics and gnostics have also taught that there is indeed a hierarchy of gods, powers or *archons* in creation, but that all these are emanations or projections of one supreme divine Source, through the agency of His divine Word. They are substations, so to speak, of His primal Power.

The deities of polytheism are frequently identified with natural forces, such as *Agni* the Hindu god of fire or *Indra* the Hindu god of the air and sky, of rain, storm, and thunder. Celestial bodies, such as the sun and moon may also be regarded as deities in their own right or have a god associated with them, like *Ra*, the sun-god of ancient Egypt, or the morning star (Quetzalcóatl) of Aztec and Maya religion. Polytheistic religions often include a belief in ghostly, demonic or other supernatural beings, some of which are malevolent. Even monotheistic religions may share a belief in supernatural beings, like the many demons of early Christianity, the *jinn* of Islam, and the devil common to all three Semitic religions.

Scholars of religion have tried to categorize the various forms of polytheism, but it is evident from its many varieties that religious belief and rational systematization make poor companions. Trying to understand the origins of polytheism, an early twentieth-century Austrian anthropologist, Wilhelm Schmidt, suggested that there could have been an ‘original monotheism (*urmonotheismus*)’ that was later overlaid by polytheism.

Scholars and intellectuals commonly regard religion as a social phenomenon, a subject for intellectual analysis and discussion. Mystics on the other hand speak of a Reality that must be experienced to be understood. Belief and concepts, they say, are one thing; mystical experience – which reveals whether there is any truth to the beliefs and concepts – is quite another.

Human beings are spiritual beings endowed with the innate potential to realize their inherent spirituality, but the majority of whom have lost sight of their inner reality. Understood from a mystical perspective, religious belief and practices – polytheistic or monotheistic – originate from an unconscious upwelling of the spirit within, seeking the higher Reality, but confused and frustrated by a mind scattered into the world of the external senses.

See also: **God** (2.1), **monotheism**.

**pradakshiṇā** (S), **padakkhiṇa** (Pa/Pk), **skor ba** (T), **yòurào**, **bōlātèqíná** (C), **unyō**, **haradokina** (J) *Lit.* moving to the right; turning the reverential right

side towards; circumambulation from left to right, *i.e.* clockwise; circumambulation of anything regarded as sacred, such as a holy man, an image, an idol, a sacred hill, a sacred fire (representing *Agni*, the fire god), a sacred plant such as *tulsī*, a sacred tree such as the *pīpal*, a temple, a shrine, a stupa (reliquary), or a *samādhi* (tomb); also called *parikramā*.

Many such objects of veneration have pathways built around them, which may be covered for the protection of worshippers from sun, rain, or snow. To keep the subject of veneration on one's right is regarded as reverential. Spiritually, the intention is to impress the fundamentals of one's spiritual or religious path upon the mind. Circumambulation also symbolizes the harmony of nature and the cosmos, such as the clockwise course that the sun was once believed to follow in relation to the earth. The custom is prevalent in Jain, Buddhist, Hindu, and Sikh traditions.

Many Hindu temples have a series of paths around them, which may be concentric, with the outermost path even circumambulating the entire village or city. Such paths are known as *pradakshiṇā* paths. *Pradakshiṇā* of a sacred fire is a part of a traditional Hindu marriage.

Circumambulation of sacred hills is common in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, with some of the pilgrims completing circuits of several hundred miles. Some pilgrims perform the *pradakshiṇā* as a sequence of contiguous full-length prostrations on the ground. In Japan, *Zen* walking meditation (*J. kinhin*) may also take the form of circumambulation, and followers of the *Tendai* (*C. Tiāntái*) school once practised circumambulation of an image of Amida (Amitābha Buddha, 'Buddha of Infinite Light') for ninety days at a time, chanting his name while holding a clear image of the idol in their minds.

It is traditionally believed that disciples would circumambulate the Buddha three times as a mark of respect. When approaching him, they would keep him to their right, seating themselves to his left. Buddhist ceremonies may include the circumambulation of a statue of the Buddha, holding offerings and reciting sacred texts. Buddhist stupas, *bodhi* trees and other sacred objects and places are similarly made the focus of ceremonial *pradakshiṇā*. There is also a Chinese *Mahāyāna* text known as the *Pradakshiṇā Sūtra*, which eulogizes the merits of worshipping at stupas.

See also: **parikramā**.

**pramārjan(a)** (S/H) *Lit.* rubbing off, wiping away, removing; in Jainism, the careful and safe removal of small creatures discovered during an inspection (*pratilekhanā*) of clothes, mendicant items such as whisk broom and alms bowl, the ground where one is about to sit, and so on.

**pratikramaṇ(a)** (S/H) *Lit.* going (*kramaṇa*) back (*prati*); stepping back, returning; in Jainism, to retrace, review, confess, admit and repent for one's faults, bad thoughts, misdeeds or contravention of one's vows, either as a mendicant monk or a layperson; the fourth of the six obligatory practices (*āvashyakas*) of a Jain mendicant, commonly adopted by devout Jain laypeople.

*Pratikramaṇa* is practised at one or more of five regular intervals:

1. *Daivasika pratikramaṇa*. Every evening, relating to the day just passed.
2. *Rātrika* or *prābhātike pratikramaṇa*. At dawn, relating to the previous night.
3. *Pākshika pratikramaṇa*. Fortnightly, on the fourteenth or fifteenth day of the month.
4. *Chāturmāsika pratikramaṇa*. At the end of every four months.
5. *Vārshika* or *saṃvatsarī pratikramaṇa*. Annually.

Early Jain texts speak of performing *pratikramaṇa* at all five times. It is only later texts that reduce the frequency to annually or only during the monsoon.<sup>1</sup> Mendicants are still expected to practise *pratikramaṇa* on all these occasions, but laypeople less regularly – some daily, others less frequently. The evening *pratikramaṇa* is more commonly practised during the four months (*chāturmāsa*) of the monsoon, particularly during the eight-day *Shvetāmbara* festival of *Paryushaṇa* and the equivalent ten-day *Digambara* festival of *Dasha-Lakshaṇa-Parvan*. The last day of these two festivals is the annual *Kshamāvanī* ('Forgiveness Day') or *Saṃvatsarī Pratikramaṇa* ('Annual Confession'), often shortened to just *Saṃvatsarī*, and the rite itself is known as *kshamāpāna* (asking forgiveness).

*Pratikramaṇa* at least once a year on *Saṃvatsarī* is regarded as mandatory for all Jains. At its most basic, the practice consists of saying "*Micchāmi dukkaḍaṃ* (may all my wrongdoings bear no fruit)" or "*Uttama kshamā* (supreme forgiveness)" to one another. *Micchāmi dukkaḍaṃ* is a contraction of *tassa micchā me dukkaḍaṃ*, itself a Prakrit rendering of the Sanskrit, *tasya mithyā me dushkrītām*. The sayings imply, "If I should have caused you any offence, knowingly or unknowingly, in thought, word or deed, then I ask your forgiveness." As a social custom, and when meant sincerely, it is a way of trying to clear the emotional burden of things said or done that have, inadvertently or otherwise, caused hurt to others. In the modern world, letters are sent and telephone calls made to friends and relatives, seeking their forgiveness for any hurts incurred.



On the other occasions, various longer confessional formulae are used, usually as a part of a generalized *ālochanā* (admission of past transgressions). A number of traditional verses or *sūtras* exist that have been referred to collectively as *Pratikramaṇa Sūtras*, the origin of which is in many cases unknown. The essence of all these formulae is expressed in the well-known verse:

I forgive all living beings:  
 may all living beings forgive me.  
 I am on friendly terms with all living beings,  
 I have no animosity towards any living being.

*Traditional Jain Prayer*

*Pratikramaṇa* implies re-establishing oneself in the fundamental Jain principles of non-violence (*ahiṃsā*), truthfulness (*satya*), non-stealing (*asteya*), celibacy (*brahmacharya*) and non-attachment (*aparigraha*), along with forgiving the faults of others (*kshamā*), asking forgiveness for our faults without any reservation, and extending friendship (*mitratā*). The practice of these virtues is believed to prevent the influx (*āsrava*) of new *karma* that obscures the true nature of the soul. *Pratikramaṇa* leads to introspection and realization of one's imperfections, and to a strengthening of the resolve not to repeat them. It may be performed at home, in a hall of fasting (*poshadhasālā*), before the *Jina* in a temple (*i.e.* the image of a *Tīrthankara*, regarded as representing the Deity), or before a mendicant monk. It is sometimes said that *pratikramaṇa* is best expressed three times: in one's mind when alone, before the *Jina*, and aloud before the *guru*. It is probably because the notion of *pratikramaṇa* is pervaded by the key principle of *ahiṃsā* (not harming) that it has come to be regarded as the primary aspect of the *āvashyakas*.<sup>2</sup>

There are sometimes said to be two forms of *pratikramaṇa* – *dravya* and *bhāva*. *Dravya-pratikramaṇa* is the outward form or ceremony, the mere repetition of words; *bhāva-pratikramaṇa* is its inner essence and reality. Naturally, *dravya-pratikramaṇa* is deemed of little account in comparison; speaking the words without sincerity or desire to improve is of little use.

Various *pratikramaṇa* formulae are used in the performance of the rite. The *airyāpathikī-pratikramaṇa*, which covers the unintended harm done to other creatures caused simply by moving about in the world, is used as a prelude to worshipping the image (*chaitya-vandana*) of a *Tīrthankara*. The traditional formula goes:

I want to make *pratikramaṇa* for injury on the path of my movement,  
 in coming and in going, in treading on living things, in treading on  
 seeds, in treading on green plants, in treading on dew, on beetles, on

mould, on moist earth, and on cobwebs; whatever living organisms with one or two or three or four or five senses have been injured by me or knocked over or crushed or squashed or touched or mangled or hurt or affrighted or removed from one place to another or deprived of life – may all that evil bear no fruit (*tasya mithyā me dushkṛitām*).

*Airyāpathikī Sūtra; cf. in JYMS pp.203–4*

This formula can be repeated without an audience, but it is more common to repeat a full sequence of *pratikramaṇa* formulae before a mendicant *guru*. The passages are repeated one after the other, with the *guru*'s instruction to continue being given at the appropriate junctures. The traditional formula for the admission of transgression (*atichārālochanā*) runs:

Instruct me, lord, at my own desire to make *ālochanā* for the day. (The *guru*: “Do so.”) I wish to make *ālochanā*. Whatever fault has been committed by me during the day in body, speech or mind, in contravention of the scriptures and of right conduct, unfitting and improper to be done, ill meditated and ill conceived, immoral and undesirable, unbecoming for a layman, in regard to knowledge and philosophy and the lay life and the holy writ and the *sāmāyika* (attainment of equanimity), and whatever transgression or infraction I may have committed in respect of the three *guptis* (forms of self-control: speech, body, mind) and four *kashāyas* (passions: anger, pride, deceit, greed) and the five *aṇuvratas*, three *guṇa-vratas*, and four *shikshā-vratas*, that is to say, the layman's twelvefold rule of conduct – may that evil bear no fruit (*tasya mithyā me dushkṛitām*).

*Atichārālochanā; cf. in JYMS pp.204–5*

This is followed – with variations for the time of day – by:

Instruct me at my own desire to make *pratikramaṇa* for all that I have done amiss this day in thought, in speech, and in act. (The *guru*: “Do so.”) May that evil bear no fruit (*tasya mithyā me dushkṛitām*).

*Atichārālochanā; cf. in JYMS p.205*

This is then followed by the *kshāmaṇā sūtra* – the request for forgiveness:

Instruct me, lord, at my own desire; I am come forward to seek forgiveness for what is within the day (*daivasika*). I want to seek forgiveness for whatever unfriendly or excessively unfriendly thing I have done this day in regard to eating and drinking, in regard to *vinaya* (monastic code) and *vaiyāvṛittyā*, in regard to speech and conversation, in regard to seating oneself at a higher or at the same level as the *guru*, or in

interrupting him when he is speaking, or in speaking louder than he, may whatever offence against *vinaya*, great or small, which you know and I do not know, bear no fruit (*tasya mithyā me dushkṛitām*).

*Atichārālochanā; cf. in JYMS pp.205–6*

See also: **āvashyaka, Dasha-Lakṣhaṇa-Parvan, micchāmi dukkaḍaṃ, pāpadeshanā, Paryuṣhaṇa.**

1. Ratnashekhara, *Shrāddha-vidhi*, SVRS p.158b.
2. See R. Williams, *Jaina Yoga*, JYMS p.207.

**pratilekhanā** (S), **pratilekhā** (Pk) *Lit.* regular inspection and cleaning of objects in daily use; in Jainism, inspection of clothing and items used by mendicant monks, such as bedding, books, mouth cloth (*mukha-vastrikā*), whisk broom, and alms bowl; performed three times daily, morning, midday, and before sunset. Cleaning of the ground is made with the whisk broom, which is either made of soft peacock feathers (*piñchī*) or strands of soft white wool (*rajoharāṇa*). Any creatures found are carefully removed (*pramārjana*) to a safe location.

**pratimā** (S/H) *Lit.* made after (somebody or something); statue, image, picture, imitation; in general, a statue, idol, or image of a deity; in Jainism, a stage in the spiritual life of a householder or layperson (*shrāvaka*), as he or she progresses towards or imitates the full life of a monk or nun; the eleven stages or degrees of renunciation in which the twelve vows (*vratas*) taken by a layperson are practised with increasing rigour; a part of the Jain code of conduct (*shrāvakāchāra*) for laypeople.

The eleven *pratimās* are listed and described in both *Digambara* and *Shvetāmbara* texts that concern the *shrāvakāchāra*.<sup>1</sup> Although there are many minor variations among the names used, their order, and other details, the sequence includes the same landmarks regarding the gradual renunciation of outer life. In earlier times, the ultimate aim of the *pratimās* was as a preparation for leaving this life by means of *sallekhanā*, voluntary death by fasting. Among *Digambaras*, the practice continues today, although only in cases when it seems clear life is coming to an end due to illness, famine, or some form of disaster. Among *Shvetāmbaras*, the number of laypeople who have resorted to *sallekhanā* has also diminished. In modern times, therefore, the primary intention has become that of steadily leading a layperson towards the life of a mendicant nun or monk, rather than towards *sallekhanā*.

Referring to both *Shvetāmbara* and *Digambara* texts, and mentioning a few of the variations, the eleven *pratimās* are:

1. *Darshana pratimā*. Right belief, right viewpoint (*samyag-darshana*); fostering acceptance, together with full and complete understanding of and faith in Jain teachings, as well as its application and practice in daily life – all of which, taken together, are known as *samyaktva*. According to some *Digambara āchāryas* of the past, such as Somadeva, Devasena and Padmanandi, this *pratimā* includes the eight basic rules (*mūla-guṇas*). These entail giving up eight particular kinds of food, viz. meat, wine, honey and five kinds of fig, which can contain minute life forms. Other, earlier *Digambara āchāryas*, such as Kundakunda and Umāswāmī, do not mention these restrictions in this context, though they may be presumed, since they are fundamental to the Jain way of life. While *Shvetāmbara* texts define the *mūla-guṇas* as the five lay vows (*aṇuvratas*). This *pratimā* is the foundation of the Jain lifestyle.
2. *Vrata pratimā*. Vows; taking and observing the twelve lay vows, comprised of the five *aṇuvratas*, the three *guṇa-vratas*, and the four *shikshā-vratas*. The twelve lay vows represent a statement of intent to be true to Jain principles. The five *aṇuvratas* are the same as the five *mahāvratas* taken by Jain monks, but followed in a less rigorous manner. They are *ahiṃsā* (non-harming, non-violence), *satya* (truth), *asteya* (not stealing), *brahmacharya* (celibacy), and *aparigraha* (non-possession, non-attachment). The *guṇa-vratas* and *shikshā-vratas* place further restrictions on diet, travel, and the potential to cause harm.
3. *Sāmāyika pratimā*. Equanimity attained by means of meditation; regular meditation and purification of one's thoughts and emotions. Texts vary concerning the frequency of performing the practice, which can be from one to three times daily for a period of one *muhūrta* (forty-eight minutes), the latter being the minimum for a monk. *Sāmāyika* is variously understood by Jain *āchāryas*, the meaning given ranging from meditation to full, ritual temple worship (*chaitya-vandana*), practised three times daily. Followers of the *Mūrtipūjaka* (image-worshipping *Shvetāmbara*) sect must also practise *sāmāyika* before the first meal of the day. Progression to the *sāmāyika pratimā* implies a firm grounding in the first two *pratimās* and a readiness to move into the contemplative phase of spiritual evolution.
4. *Poshadhopavāsa pratimā*. Periodic (*poshadha*) fasting and abstinence (*upavāsa*); fasting and refraining from normal daily activities, both household and business, on the eighth and fourteenth days of the lunar fortnight, i.e. four times a month. The time is to be spent in study of the scriptures, prayer, listening to spiritual discourses, or meditation. This

*pratimā* sees the addition of regular periods of renunciation to the life of a *shrāvaka* (layperson). There are significant differences between the *Digambara* and *Shvetāmbara* practices of *poshadhopavāsa*.

5. *Sachitta-tyāga pratimā*. Relinquishing (*tyāga*) the eating or serving of living, conscious (*sachitta*) creatures. Jains are strictly vegetarian, and this additional dietary restriction relates to the eating of fresh fruit and vegetables, because they are still alive at the moment of consumption. For the fulfilment of this *pratimā*, therefore, all vegetables must be thoroughly cooked before eating or serving to others. *Sachitta-tyāga pratimā* also includes not trampling upon growing plants, not picking fruit directly from a tree, abstaining from the use of salt, and drinking only boiled water. It is listed in *Shvetāmbara* texts as the seventh *pratimā*. Each of the ensuing *pratimās* entails increasing renunciation of the body and of the world.
6. *Rātribhukta-tyāga pratimā* or *rātribhojana-tyāga pratimā*. Giving up (*tyāga*) eating (*bhukta*, *bhojana*) at night (*rātri*). The rationale behind abstinence from eating at night is again founded upon the Jain principle of *ahiṃsā*. If a person eats in the dark, he may inadvertently eat and kill some other living creature that has fallen into the bowl. If he lights a candle, then insects attracted to the light will also die.  
This *pratimā* is also interpreted as sexual continence during the day, *i.e.* giving up sexual relations except at night (*rātri*), though even at that time moderation is expected. In some *Shvetāmbara* texts, it is called *kāyotsarga* (abandonment of body) *pratimā*, which generally refers to standing meditation, especially at night during *parvan* days (twice fortnightly).
7. *Abrahma-varjana pratimā* or *brahmacharya pratimā*. Abandoning (*varjana*) all incontinence (*abrahma*); complete sexual continence (*brahmacharya*); relinquishing all sexual desire and anything that might lead to it, such as personal adornment *etc.*; listed in *Shvetāmbara* texts as the sixth or eighth *pratimā*. In some *Shvetāmbara* texts, being alone with a woman, including one's wife, or even conversing with a woman is also prohibited.
8. *Ārambha-tyāga pratimā*. Giving up all harmful activity (*ārambha*). This entails relinquishing all activity, whether of household or business, since all actions are likely to cause harm to other creatures. Some *Shvetāmbara* texts do not prohibit the continuation of such activities through intermediaries, such as agents or servants, for the purposes of maintaining a livelihood.

9. *Parigraha-tyāga pratimā*. Giving up the possession (*parigraha*) of anything; reducing the desire for possessions to a minimum; detachment from all possessions; relinquishing the ten kinds of worldly possession, viz. land, home, silver, gold, livestock, grain, clothes, utensils, maidservants, and menservants. Here, the individual distributes all his property to his family and heirs or donates it in charity. As regards food, clothing and shelter, the individual may keep only what is essential. In this way, a layperson prepares him- or herself for the complete renunciation required of a monk or nun. In *Shvetāmbara* texts the ninth *pratimā* is called *preshya-tyāga* (giving up servants), combining it with *anumati-tyāga pratimā*.
10. *Anumati-tyāga pratimā*. Relinquishing even the overseeing and advising (*anumati*) of servants and intermediaries regarding household and business matters, handing over all such activity to brothers, sons or other family members, harbouring no feelings of agreement or disagreement regarding whatever they may do; eating whatever food is put before one, either in one's own or someone else's home, reflecting that one will soon be living on others' leftovers. This is further preparation for the eleventh *pratimā*, and leads to the complete renunciation of all worldly affairs. Though still living at home, the *shrāvaka* is now essentially living the life of a Jain monk or ascetic.
11. *Uddishṭa-tyāga pratimā*. Purposeful (*uddishṭa*) renunciation; leaving the family home, going to a lonely place or monastic hall of residence, and adopting the rules laid down for mendicant monks; relinquishing the eating of food that has been specially prepared, and living on whatever is offered, so long as it conforms to food permissible for monks; shaving all hair from the head or wearing a top-knot. This is the highest *pratimā* attainable by a householder.

*Shvetāmbara* texts list *uddishṭa-tyāga pratimā* as the tenth *pratimā*, the eleventh being *shramaṇa-bhūta* (being-like-a-monk) *pratimā*, in which the individual either shaves the head or performs the practice of pulling out the hair (*kesha-locha*), taking up the monastic whisk broom (*rajoharaṇa*) and begging bowl (*pātra*).<sup>2</sup>

The individual is to wear only one garment made of a single piece of cloth. In some instances, this is identified as a loincloth, but not in all cases. The person is also to live by begging, following the monastic rules. In later *Digambara* texts, however, the eleventh *pratimā* is subdivided into two. In the first stage, the individual wears a single garment; in the second, he wears only a loincloth and his head is either shaved or the hair pulled out in the traditional manner.

Later, during the sixteenth century, those who had reached these two stages received the names of *kshullaka* (fem. *kshullikā*) and *ailaka*.

In modern times, *kshullikās* are permitted to wear a white sari, and *kshullakas* an undergarment and two outer garments. *Ailakas* wear only a loincloth. Although a *Digambara* woman can go on to become a nun (*āryikā*), only men can go on to the second level of the eleventh *pratimā*, since it requires the divesting of all clothes except the loincloth. *Digambara* nuns are clothed in white, like *Shvetāmbara* nuns.

The eleven stages culminate in a stage close to that of a full mendicant monk (*muni* or *sādhu*), but several practices remain prohibited. The *Sāgāra-dharmāmṛita* of Āśhādhara<sup>3</sup> says that a layperson who has reached the eleventh *pratimā* may not study the deeper mysteries of the scriptures; may not practise *kāyotsarga* for a whole day; may not beg for alms in the same manner as a full monk; may not use the traditional monk's greeting of a layperson; and is not permitted to practise *trikāla* (three-seasons) *yoga*, which entails meditation on a hilltop during the hot season, beneath a tree during the rainy season, and by a river during winter. It should be emphasized again that the details of these *pratimās* vary from text to text, as well as between the two major (*Digambara* and *Shvetāmbara*) and some of the minor Jain sects.

The general advice given to *shrāvakas* is to proceed through the *pratimās* at a pace that is individually comfortable and sustainable according to personal temperament and circumstances. Not all individuals are suited to the life of a full monk or nun.

See also: **ailaka** (7.1), **darshana** (8.1), **kshullaka** (7.1), **sāmāyika** (8.5), **samyaktva** (8.1), **upavāsa**, **vrata** (►4).

1. See e.g. Haribhadra, *Shramaṇopāsaka-pratimā-pañchāshaka* 4–33, *SUPP*; Samantabhadra, *Ratnakaraṇḍa Shrāvakāchāra* 5:16–26, *RKSS*; Āśhādhara, *Sāgāra-dharmāmṛita* 3:7–8, 7:9–50, *SDAM*; Amitagati, *Shrāvakāchāra* 7:67, *SAAD*; Vasunandin, *Shrāvakāchāra* 299–313, *SCVJ*; Chāmuṇḍarāya, *Chāritrasāra*, *CSCM* pp.19–20; Kārttikeya, *Dvādashānuprekshā* 382–83, *DAKU*; Rājamalla, *Lāṭī-saṃhitā* 7:55–56; *Shrāvaka-dharma-dohaka* 10–17; in *JYMS* pp.172–81.
2. Early *Digambara* texts by Kundakunda, Samantabhadra and Chāmuṇḍarāya are similar. Kundakunda, *Sūtra-prābhṛita* 21; Samantabhadra, *Ratnakaraṇḍa Shrāvakāchāra* 5:26, *RKSS*; Chāmuṇḍarāya, *Chāritrasāra*, *CSCM* p.19; in *JYMS* pp.178–79.
3. Āśhādhara, *Sāgāra-dharmāmṛita* 7:49–50, *SDAM*, in *JYMS* pp.180–81.

**pratyākhyān(a)** (S/H), **paccakkhāna** (Pk) *Lit.* abandonment, renunciation, refusal; in Jainism, renunciation or abandonment of anything, especially



particular thoughts, actions or foods, for certain pre-determined periods of time; self-denial; a ritualized vow or statement of intent to engage for a specified period in a particular religious or spiritual activity, such as fasting or adhering to some specific dietary restriction, or to avoid certain thoughts or actions, particularly those that would cause harm to any other living being; usually made before a mendicant or the image of a *Tīrthankara*; one of the six *āvashyakas*, the obligatory, daily practices or rites of a mendicant monk; sometimes performed, together with *vandana* (reverence for the holy ones) and *stuti* (praise, eulogy, adoration), which is also called *Chaturviṃshati Stava* ('Praise of the Twenty-Four' *Tīrthankaras*). In some respects, *pratyākhyāna* is the future-looking equivalent of *pratikramaṇa* (confession of past transgressions).

The periods over which the restrictions are to be observed are limited by such things as "for as long as ... I do not unbend my thumb", "unclench my fist", "loosen this knot", "enter my house", "these sweat droplets do not dry", "these (predetermined number of) breaths continue", "these drops of moisture on the bed do not dry", "this lamp does not go out", and so forth. Such restrictions are suitable for laypeople, but there are others intended more for mendicants. These are generally concerned with food restrictions such as eating only once a day, or eating only one kind of food, or fasting for a certain period such as one *muhūrta* (forty-eight minutes), for the first half of the day, or for the whole day.<sup>1</sup> Hemachandra provides a detailed list of such *pratyākhyāna* formulae together with valid reasons for breaking the commitment. For instance:

When the sun is risen, I renounce, for as long as the *namaskāra* (a recitation) lasts, the fourfold kinds of food and except for cases of unawareness or of *force majeure* I abandon them.

When the sun is risen, I renounce, for the duration of a *paurushī* (a quarter of the day or night), the fourfold aliments (*i.e.* a total fast) and except for cases of unawareness, or of *force majeure*, or of overcast skies, or of confusion of north and south, or of instructions from a monk, or except in order to attain full tranquillity of mind I abandon them....

I take only the *ekāshana* (eating one meal a day or eating in one posture), otherwise renouncing the fourfold kinds of food and except for cases of unawareness, or of *force majeure*, or of householder's business, or except when the food offered has to be rejected, or except for more important business, or except in order to attain full tranquillity of mind I abandon them, not moving except for contortions and stretchings of the body or in rising to salute the *guru*.

*Hemachandra, Yoga Shāstra* 3:130.1–2, 4, *YSHG* p.698ff.; cf. in *JYMS* pp.209–10



The “more important business” implies attending to the needs of a member of the Jain community that could not be addressed by someone else and is of equal spiritual merit to the performance of the *pratyākhyāna*. The intention in all cases seems to be the exercise and strengthening of one’s willpower in the remembrance of one’s religious or spiritual practices and the removal of karmic matter from the soul.

See also: **āvashyaka**.

1. Hemachandra, *Yoga Shāstra* 3:130, *YSHG* pp.697–710, in *JYMS* p.208.

**pravāraṇā** (S), **pavāraṇā** (Pa), **dgag phye** (T), **zìzì, suíyì** (C), **jìshì, zui’i** (J) *Lit.* summons, call, invitation, presentation; religious ceremony; the Buddhist ceremony that marks the end of the three or four months of the rainy-season retreat (S. *varsha*, Pa. *vassa*); lifting (*phye*) of restrictions (*dgag*); requires a minimum attendance of five monks. The Chinese *zìzì*, of which the Japanese *jìshì* is a phonetic rendering, were old translations of *pravāraṇā*, having overtones of self-indulgence implying that the restrictions imposed during the retreat are now over and that the monk is free to follow his own bent of mind. The terms used since the eighth century are *suíyì* (C) and *zui’i* (J) (‘following one’s will’). In a ceremony known as the *uposadha* (Pa. *uposatha*), Buddhist monks meet twice a month on the full- and new-moon days for a recitation of the *prātimoksha* (rules of monastic conduct). *Pravāraṇā* replaces the last *uposadha* of the rainy-season retreat.

In Southeast Asia, the ceremony is held at the monastery on a full moon day of the seventh or eighth lunar month when all the monks are in residence. The *pravāraṇā* ceremony is an invitation to criticism. During the ceremony, each monk, in order of seniority, invites the *sangha* (community) to criticize him by pointing out whether he has been seen, heard or suspected of any misconduct, *i.e.* breaking the *prātimoksha* during the retreat. The monk may also confess his ‘sins’ of his own account. The ceremony is regarded as one of purification by acknowledgement of misconduct. It also helps to clear the air of any disharmony that may have arisen during the rains retreat.

If a monk is ill, he can appoint someone to ask the *sangha* on his behalf. If he has committed an offence that has not been atoned for, he is not permitted to attend. According to the *vinaya* (code of discipline), various other categories of people are not permitted to attend the monks’ *pravāraṇā*. These include: laypeople; nuns; novices of either sex; eunuchs and hermaphrodites; and monks who have seduced nuns, who have been expelled from or have left the order voluntarily, who will not admit their wrongdoing, who are posing as monks but have not been ordained, and who have murdered a parent or an *arhat* (enlightened person). Traditionally, during the course of *pravāraṇā* day,

laypeople come to the monastery to make offerings of food, donate fabric for the monks' robes, and offer items for their parents and departed ancestors.<sup>1</sup> The *pravāraṇā* ceremony is followed by the *Kaṭhina* festival, when the laity donate cloth or robes to the monastery, which are distributed to the assembled monks who have correctly observed the rains retreat. It is the largest alms-giving festival in the Buddhist calendar.

*Pavāraṇā* is mentioned in relatively few places in the Pali *suttas*, but more frequently in the *Vinaya Piṭaka*.<sup>2</sup> In the *Pavāraṇā Sutta* of the *Samyutta Nikāya*, the Buddha initiates the ceremony by asking his disciples, "Come now, *bhikkhus*, let me invite you: 'Is there any deed of mine, either bodily or verbal, which you would censure?'" Sāriputta, one of his leading disciples responds that there is nothing to be criticized, going on to ask whether the Buddha has any criticisms of the five hundred disciples in the assembly, "all of them *arahantas*". The Buddha says that he has no criticisms to level at any of them, since all are enlightened to a greater or lesser extent.<sup>3</sup>

Commentating on a verse from the *Shūrangama Sūtra*, the Chinese Buddhist Master Hsuan Hua (1918–1995) explains the purpose of *pravāraṇā*:

During the three-month retreat, people might have committed offences and broken rules, and so at the close of the retreat, at the end of the ninety days, it was necessary to hold a communal examination during which everyone was encouraged to confess his offences frankly. This was the *pravāraṇā*. If anyone had committed offences without realizing it, then others in the assembly were expected to question him and help him see his mistakes. Nothing was held back, and everyone was expected to answer the questions he was asked and to admit his faults without argument. This discussion was carried on in an open, orderly fashion without anyone giving rise to afflictions or becoming angry when his errors and faults were pointed out. In this way, they rid each other of their faults. This kind of communal examination was designed to cause people to mend their ways and move toward the good. Everything that had happened before became a dead issue, and everything that happened from that day onward was like a new life. People were encouraged to do things that benefit body and mind and to avoid things that do not.

*Master Hsuan Hua, on Shūrangama Sūtra; cf. SS1 pp.113–14*

See also: **chāturmāsa, kaṭhina, upośadha, varsha.**

1. See "pravāraṇā," *Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*, PDB.
2. E.g. *Majjhima Nikāya* 118, *Ānāpānasati Sutta*, PTSM3 p.79; *Vinaya Piṭaka, Mahāvagga* 7, 9, PTSV1 pp.254, 319, 334.
3. *Samyutta Nikāya* 8:7, *Pavāraṇā Sutta*, PTSS1 pp.190–91, CDBB pp.286–87.

**prayer flag** (T. *rlung rta*) A square, coloured, cloth flag, in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, symbolizing luck and good wishes for oneself and others as it flutters in the wind. See **rlung rta**.

**prayersticks** Wooden sticks or hollow reeds of varying lengths, to which things such as feathers, sprigs of herb, cornhusks and shells are attached, and which are filled (if hollow) with items such as herbs, pieces of feather, and semiprecious stones; may be painted and/or carved; generally intended to convey prayers to a particular spirit or deity, whose special function the suppliants wish to invoke – maybe rain, an abundant harvest, hunting, healing, protection, and indeed most other aspects of human life. Suitable prayers are ‘breathed’ into the prayersticks, often formed into bundles, which are then left in trees and shrubs, by springs or in fields, on altars, in caves, or at any place where it is thought that the spirits to whom the prayers have been addressed will find them. Prayersticks, known to the different tribal nations by various names, are used especially by the Apache, the Navajo (*keetan*), and the Hopi (*paho*) and other Pueblo Indians. They also feature in a number of myths and legends.<sup>1</sup>

See also: **paho**.

1. See “prayersticks,” *Native American Mythology*, NAMZ; “keetan,” *Dictionary of Native American Mythology*, DNAM.

**prayer wheel** (T. *ma ni 'khor lo*) The Tibetan prayer wheel. See **ma ni 'khor lo**.

**p-r-d-s** (He) *Lit.* orchard; the consonants of the word *pardes*. *Pardes* is used in Jewish mystical literature as a symbol of the inner spiritual regions, like gardens, meadows, pastures, and other similar terms. It echoes the symbolism of the Garden of Eden as the spiritual realms or God’s heavenly garden. The word is derived from the old Persian (*paridaiza*), through the Greek *paradeisos* (paradise), having the original meaning of an enclosed area of land and, hence, an enclosed royal garden or orchard. In the *Zohar*, the primary text of the medieval Kabbalah, the consonants of the word *pardes* – p-r-d-s – were interpreted as a template for understanding the *Torah* (the Hebrew Bible).

According to the kabbalists, the *Torah* can be understood symbolically as the Tree of Life that brings divine nourishment into the creation and provides a map for the stages of return to God. They believed that God had uttered the entire *Torah*. Its language thus carries a divine significance, and is an expression of His holiness, His creative power, His will, His being. They therefore

mined the *Torah* to find the deeper, sacred meaning that they believed lay concealed in its text.

This approach was called *p-r-d-s*, the four letters making an acronym for the four levels at which the Bible can be understood: *peshat*, the simple, literal meaning; *remez*, hint, allusion, the implied meaning; *drash*, the allegorical and discursive interpretation; and *sod*, the secret, esoteric, or mystical meaning. The *Torah* was hence viewed as an esoteric text, its literal meaning concealing and providing a hint to its inner, secret meaning. The designations of these levels of interpretation were, however, not constant, and often changed according to the writer.

Isaiah Tishby, in introducing his translation of the *Zohar*, writes of the importance of understanding that the *Torah*'s mystical meaning is like its soul. Yet he also emphasizes that the mystical meanings do not undermine the literal meaning:

The author of the *Zohar* develops the basic idea of the hidden and revealed meanings of *Torah* by stressing the divine, mystical importance of the soul of *Torah* in contrast to its physical elements and its outer 'garments'. He does, however, accord a positive value to the *peshat*, *drash* and *remez* approach to scriptural interpretation, seeing them as vital, organic parts of the *Torah* structure, and as aids to the uncovering of the mystical truths within....

The *Zohar* itself shows no sign of wishing to question the basic premises of traditional, rabbinic Judaism. On the contrary, its clear intention is to enhance its beauty by purifying it of any possible faults and by bringing out the divine, mystical light that is hidden within it.

*Isaiah Tishby, Wisdom of the Zohar, WZ3 p.1089*

The *Zohar* understood the ascension to higher realms as a gradual journey during which the soul would pass through four stages of spiritual understanding:

1. Knowledge of the exterior aspect of things.<sup>1</sup>
2. Knowledge of the essence of things.<sup>2</sup>
3. Knowledge infused by intuition.
4. Knowledge acquired by love, since the *Torah* reveals its secrets only to those who love it.<sup>3</sup>

Some of the kabbalists understood the *sod* (esoteric) level to refer to *gematria*, a system of combining the letters of the *Torah* text in order to reveal the hidden, 'holy' names of God and the angels. Through concentration on these names and by recombining them in different ways, they had ecstatic experiences and inner visions of higher realms, which they sometimes described as 'entering' the *pardes* (*p-r-d-s*). The *Zohar* says that the *Torah* contains all secrets. This

represents the *sod*, the last letter of *p-r-d-s*, and signifies the hidden and esoteric meaning of the *Torah*. These secrets are revealed to those who see it through the garment it takes on to conceal it from those who are not “wise”:

The Holy One, blessed be He, puts all the secret things that He does into the holy *Torah*, and it all exists in the *Torah*. The *Torah* reveals the secret, and then immediately clothes it in another garb, and it is hidden there and not revealed. The wise who are full of eyes, although the matter is sealed in a garment, see it through the garment. And when the matter is revealed, before it enters the garment it is seen by those with sharp eyes; and even though it is immediately concealed, it is not lost from their sight.

*Zohar 2:99a–b, WZ1 p.195*

The *Zohar* often teaches through stories and parables. In one such story, an “old man” explains the depth of the *Torah* and how it hides its teachings from those who cannot understand, referring to the various levels of interpretation described in the Kabbalah. The old man says:

It is not for this alone that I began to speak, for an old man like me does not rattle on or raise his voice for one thing only. How confused the inhabitants of the world are in their understanding! They do not see the path of truth in the *Torah*, but the *Torah* calls to them every day in love, and they will not even turn their heads. It is true, as I have said, that the *Torah* takes a subject from its sheath, and it is revealed for a moment and then immediately hidden; but when it is revealed from within its sheath, and then at once concealed, it is revealed only to those who know it and recognize it.

What can be compared to this? It is like a girl, beautiful and gracious, and much loved, and she is kept closely confined in her palace. She has a special lover, unrecognized by anyone and concealed. This lover, because of the love that he feels for her, passes by the door of her house and looks on every side, and she knows that her lover is constantly walking to and fro by the door of her house. What does she do? She opens a tiny door in the secret palace where she lives and shows her face to her love. Then she withdraws at once and is gone. None of those in her lover’s vicinity sees or understands, but her lover alone knows, and his heart and soul and inner being yearn for her, and he knows that it is because of the love that she bears him that she showed herself to him for a moment, in order to awaken love in him.

So it is with the *Torah*. She reveals herself only to her lover. The *Torah* knows that the wise man walks to and fro every day by the door of her house. What does she do? She shows her face to him from the

palace and signals to him, and she withdraws at once to her palace and hides herself. None of those who are there knows or understands, but he alone knows, and his heart and soul and inner being yearn for her. And so the *Torah* is revealed, and then is hidden, and treats her lover lovingly, in order to awaken love in him.

Come and see. This is the way of the *Torah*. At first, when she begins to reveal herself to a man, she gives him a sign. If he understands, good. If he does not understand, she sends (a messenger) to him and calls him a fool. The *Torah* says to the messenger that she sends to him, "Tell that fool to come here, that I might speak with him." So it is written, "Whoever is foolish, let him turn hither, he that lacks understanding."<sup>4</sup> He comes to her, and she begins to speak with him through the curtain that she has spread before him, in the way that best suits him, so that he can understand little by little, and this is *drash* (allegorical and discursive interpretation). Then she talks with him through a very fine veil and discusses enigmatic things, and this is *haggadah* (storytelling, often symbolic). And then when he has become accustomed to her, she reveals herself to him face to face, and speaks to him about all her hidden mysteries, and all the hidden paths, that have laid concealed in her heart from ancient times (*sod*, the hidden secrets). Then he becomes a complete man, a true master of *Torah*, the lord of the house, for she has revealed all her mysteries to him, and she has neither hidden nor withheld anything from him.

She says to him: "You saw the sign that I made to you at the beginning. These are the mysteries that were contained within it. This is what it really is."

He sees at once that one should not add to these things or subtract from them. The real meaning of the text of scripture is then revealed, (from which) one should not add or subtract even a single letter. Therefore, men ought to take note of the *Torah* and pursue her, and become her lovers, as I have explained.

*Zohar 2:99a–b, WZ1 pp.196–97*

See also: **pardes** (4.1).

1. *Zohar* 2:36b, in "Zohar," *JE*.
2. *Zohar* 2:36b, in "Zohar," *JE*.
3. *Zohar* 2:99b, in "Zohar," *JE*.
4. *Proverbs* 9:4.

**psalm** (Gk. *psalmos*, He. *tehillah*, L. *psalmus*) A sacred song sung as a part of religious or spiritual worship; a hymn; specifically, any of the sacred songs

contained in the biblical book of *Psalms*, written in Hebrew and traditionally ascribed to King David, but in fact written by a variety of authors over an extended period of time that is very difficult to determine. Estimates range from 1400–450 BCE, much depending upon whether ‘historical’ pointers in the text are understood literally or are analysed more critically. See **hymn**.

**pu‘uhonua** (Hw) *Lit.* earth (*honua*) hill (*pu‘u*); in the native Hawaiian tradition, a sanctuary, a place of refuge, a place of peace and safety. A *pu‘u* is any kind of protuberance from a pimple to a hill, generally a hill that has vegetation and wildlife, having been spared destruction by a lava flow due to its abrupt change in elevation. *Honua* means ‘land’, ‘earth’, ‘world’, or ‘a place set aside’.

*Pu‘uhonua* were places of refuge, peace, safety, and forgiveness. If a criminal on the run could reach a *pu‘uhonua* before being captured, he would, in modern terms, be ‘home free’. No one could harm a person who took refuge within their walls. Usually one existed in each district of the islands. The grounds of such *heiau* were so sacred that even a defeated enemy soldier or *kapu* (taboo) breaker would be protected:

The priests who attended the *pu‘uhonua* performed elaborate purification rituals on those that came to them. Once cleansed, such people could safely return to normal life, and no reparation could be made against them, even by the highest chief. Their past crimes were forgotten.

*Scott Cunningham, Hawaiian Religion & Magic, HRMC p.91*

See also: **heiau**, **kapu**.

**pūjā** (S/H/Pa/Pu), **pūj** (Pu), **mchod pa** (T), **gòng** (C), **ku** (J) *Lit.* worship, adoration, reverence, honour, homage, devotion; the act of worship; can involve external rites, or can be entirely personal, internal, and meditative in nature; common to Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain traditions. External *pūjā* includes many types of ceremony, ranging from the ritual offering of flowers, leaves, rice, water and so on to the idols of deities, together with the burning of incense before them, to the sacrifice of goats and chickens, as practised in Hindu *Kālī* or *Durgā* temples. During *pūjā*, musical instruments are played, bells are sounded and conches are blown. Sometimes the idols are taken in a ceremonial procession around the temple complex to the accompaniment of music. *Pūjā* is generally practised in devotion to the supreme Being, to a *guru* or holy man, or to a particular deity.

### *Jain Pūjā*

The primary focus of worship in the Jain tradition is the twenty-four *Tīrthankaras* who took birth during the present cycle of time, according to Jain cosmology. They are the spiritual fathers and exemplars of the Jains. However, since *Tīrthankaras* are fully liberated and enlightened beings, dwelling in *siddhaloka* beyond the confines of the material and other realms comprising the universe, they remain unmoved by human offerings; nor do they respond to human prayers and entreaties for the fulfilment of desires and help with daily problems. For these functions, Jains resort to the worship of various deities and *yakshas* (semi-divine spirits). Five classes of great being (*pañcha-parameshṭhin*), according to Jain philosophy, are also deemed worthy of worship. These are *arahantas* (enlightened ones), *siddhas* (perfected, liberated ones), *āchāryas* (mendicant leaders), *upādhyāyas* (teachers, preceptors), and *sādhus* (mendicant monks). Daily worship of the *Tīrthankaras*, deities, *arahantas* and others, is known generically as *deva pūjā*, of which there are many varieties. *Deva pūjā* is one of the six daily obligations (*karmans*) of the Jain laity.

There are two main schools of Jain worship – one that worships images of the *Tīrthankaras*, deities, *yakshas* and past *āchāryas*, and one that does not. *Shvetāmbara* image worshippers are known as *Mūrtipūjakas* (image worshippers). The generic, spiritual idea of all the *Tīrthankaras* or *Jinas* as a single whole is often called the *Jina*. In this sense, the *Jina* represents the Jain notion of God. Worship of the formless *Jina* is called *nirguṇa pūjā* (worship without form); and worship of images is known as *saguṇa pūjā* (worship with form). There are differences between the rituals performed by the laity and those practised by mendicant monks. Some rites are practised daily, others entail more elaborate ceremonies and are reserved for special occasions. *Darshana* (worshipful, devotional viewing) of images of the *Tīrthankaras* is also practised by both laity and monks.<sup>1</sup>

In both *Shvetāmbara* and *Digambara* traditions, *pūjā* includes reciting the names (*nāma*) of the *Tīrthankaras*; bathing (*abhisheka*, *snapana*) the image of the *Tīrthankara*; anointing different parts or limbs (*anga*) of the image of the *Tīrthankara* with sandalwood paste (*anga pūjā*); making offerings of lighted lamps (*ārati*), incense, flowers, rice, and other food stuffs; repetition (*japa*) of sacred *mantras*; and singing hymns of praise (*stuti* or *stava*). Places (*kshetra*) associated with the *Tīrthankaras* (their *kalyāṇa-sthānas*), such as where they were born, renounced the world, attained enlightenment and so on, are also worshipped (*kshetra pūjā*).

Among *Shvetāmbaras*, Jain temple *pūjā* includes the practice (known as *āṅgī*) of dressing the consecrated image of a *Tīrthankara* or his guardian deities with ornaments and special clothing or silver armour. In another *Shvetāmbara* ceremony (*snātra pūjā*, ablution worship), the image of a *Tīrthankara* is bathed in a ritual re-enactment of the ceremony of bathing an



infant *Tīrthankara* that is said to have been performed by the gods on Mount Meru at the time of the *Tīrthankara*'s birth.

In *Digambara* temples, images remain unadorned. A traditional, daily *Digambara* ceremony for laypeople is the *ashṭa-dravya pūjā* (eight-substance worship), also known as *ashṭaka pūjā* (eightfold worship), in which eight substances are used. These substances are used for bathing (*abhisheka*) the consecrated image of a *Tīrthankara* or are offered to it and placed before or upon it. The eight substances are sandalwood paste (*chandana*), flowers (*pushpa*), incense (*dhūpa*), a camphor lamp (*dīpaka*), uncooked rice (*akshata*), sweetmeats (*naivedya*), fruit (*phala*) or nuts, and purified water (*jala*) or the five nectars (*pañchāmṛita*). Such worship appears to be of ancient origin. Aspects of this *pūjā* such as bathing the image, and the offerings of flowers, incense and lamps are found in the *Paumachariya*, a *Digambara* text attributed to Vimalasūri, a Jain teacher of uncertain date, but who lived some time during the first few centuries CE.

The details of the rites associated with this *pūjā* vary from region to region. The image of the *Tīrthankara* is kept in a small inner room (*gabhāra*), a kind of 'holy of holies' to which the Jain laity in North India are permitted entry in order to make their offerings. In South India, they are not permitted to enter this inner sanctum, and the rites are performed on their behalf by a Jain *brāhmaṇ* or *upādhye*, although they are allowed to make the offerings themselves when the *pūjā* is performed at home. In North India, the offerings are accompanied by the recitation of various liturgies or *mantras*.

The corresponding *Shvetāmbara* ceremony for laypeople is known as *ashṭaprakārī pūjā* (eight-category worship), which is practised only in the morning. Laypeople are permitted entry to the inner sanctum, and may even touch the idol if they are in a state of ritual purity, have bathed, are wearing clean clothes that are normally used only for worship (and never for eating or when going to the toilet), and are holding a cloth over their mouths to prevent any minute droplets of spittle or mucus from defiling the idol. Like the equivalent *Digambara* rite, there are many variations in the details of the rites associated with the ritual. The worship includes a threefold, clockwise circumambulation (*pradakṣhiṇā*) of the idol while repeating certain chants or prayers, and some of the offerings are placed on the idol itself – flowers in the lap, and on the knees, shoulders, and head; cooling sandalwood paste and camphor on the big toes, knees, wrists, shoulders, head, forehead, throat, heart, and navel; and maybe a garland around the neck. Incense and a lighted lamp are wafted before the idol, but food offerings are placed in the main temple. Auspicious symbols such as the *svastika* are formed out of the rice. After completing worship of the *Tīrthankara*, the devotee may continue by worshipping the images of various deities, *yakshas*, and departed *āchāryas*.<sup>2</sup>

Upon entering the main door of the temple, the devotee utters the word "*nisīhi* (it is abandoned)" three times as a statement of intent to abandon

the material world in body, speech, and mind. *Nisīhi* is repeated once again upon entry to the inner sanctum of the temple, signifying the completion of temple activities; and it is repeated once again after completion of outer worship (*dravya pūjā*, actual worship). Following this the devotee begins a period of inner worship (*bhāva pūjā*, mental worship). On leaving the temple, the individual says “*avasīhi* (it is re-entered)”, indicating re-entry to the world.

Each of the rites and offerings are said to possess a symbolic meaning, although variously interpreted by different Jain groups. For example, clockwise circumambulation of the image indicates reverence, and the three circuits symbolize the three jewels (*triratna*) or fundamentals of Jain philosophy: right faith, right knowledge, and right conduct. The water and lustration represent purity and washing away *karmas*. The cooling sandalwood and camphor paste symbolize cooling of the passions and the attainment of inner serenity. Flowers and garlands signify faith, forgiveness, or the fragrance of the three jewels. Burning incense suggests the burning of *karma* or the elimination of desire and spiritual ignorance. A lighted lamp wafted before the image symbolizes the spiritual light that illumines the darkness of spiritual ignorance. The rice, sweetmeats and fruit or nuts are arranged on a tray or table in the shape of an ornate *svastika*, known as a *nandyāvarta*, with three dots above. The four arms of the *svastika* represent *saṃsāra* (worldly existence, transmigration) and the four categories of life into which a soul can be born (human, plant and other living beings, heavenly and hellish). The three dots above the *nandyāvarta* once again symbolize the three jewels.<sup>3</sup>

Each of the eight parts of the *pūjā* is generally accompanied by various chants and *mantras* reflecting this or similar symbolism. The intention is to turn the mind away from the world, and to remind the worshipper of the spiritual attributes of the *Tīrthankaras* and of the spiritual goal of life. *Pūjā* performed as a matter of routine and with a wandering mind will have little benefit. Thus, while bathing the image, the devotee may sing, with mind concentrated upon the meaning of the words:

My soul, a *kalasha* (water pot) made of gnosis,  
I fill with the water of equanimity.  
And as I bathe the *arihanta*,  
my *karmas* are washed away.

*Jain Pūjā Chant; cf. JPP1*

While applying sandalwood paste, the worshipper may repeat:

He whose face reflects the tranquillity within,  
he whose very nature is tranquil –

That *arihanta* do I worship,  
to make my soul tranquil.

*Jain Pūjā Chant; cf. JPP1*

Likewise, while holding a flower:

A fragrant flower in full bloom I hold  
for this *pūjā*, which destroys the misery of birth.  
Just as a bee hovers around the flower  
I ask that I be around you always,  
and that *samyaktva* (right faith) be imprinted upon me.

*Jain Pūjā Chant; cf. JPP1*

And while offering incense:

Meditation illumines the dense darkness,  
just as I offer incense before the beautiful eyes of the *Jina*;  
Driving away the bad odour of wrong faith,  
the innate nature of the soul emerges.

*Jain Pūjā Chant; cf. JPP1*

And while waving a lighted lamp:

Like a lamp, help us distinguish between good and bad,  
to avoid sorrow in this world –  
So that, one day, my internal lamp of knowledge  
will illuminate the entire universe.

*Jain Pūjā Chant; cf. JPP1*

And while forming rice into symbolic designs:

Pure unbroken rice do I hold,  
drawing this large *nandyāvarta*.  
In the presence of my lord,  
I wish all my worldliness  
to be indefinitely cast aside.

*Jain Pūjā Chant; cf. JPP1*

And on offering sweetmeats:

Many times have I gone hungry.  
O pure one with no trace of desire,  
satisfy me eternally.

*Jain Pūjā Chant; cf. JPP1*

And for the fruits:

Like *Indra* and other *devas*,  
 out of their extreme love for you,  
 I bring along ‘fruits’ to worship.  
 Upon meeting you, O supreme soul,  
 I renounce worldly aspirations  
 and desire only *moksha* (liberation)  
 as the fruit of all my actions.

*Jain Pūjā Chant; cf. JPP1*

*Dravya pūjā* (external worship) is contrasted with *bhāva pūjā* (mental or internal worship), a form of meditation in which the *pūjā* is performed in the concentrated mind, and which is the primary form of worship for the non-image-worshipping traditions. It can include the recitation of *mantras* and the singing of hymns of praise (*stavas* or *stotras*) addressed to the *Tīrthankaras*, deities, and so on. Both *dravya pūjā* and *bhāva pūjā* can be practised in a temple, in a dwelling hall (*upāshraya*), or in a domestic shrine.

*Shvetāmbara* temple maintenance and worship is assisted by a *pujārī*, a ritual assistant and general temple servant. A *pujārī* keeps the temple and its precincts clean, decorates and cleans the images, prepares materials for use in worship, and can assist laypeople with the performance of elaborate rituals. They may also perform daily worship on a temporary basis for absent members of the congregation. They are also permitted to consume the food offered to the *Tīrthankara* images. Since Jains are not allowed to eat this food themselves, *pujārīs* are often members of *brāhmaṇ* or other high-caste Hindu families.<sup>4</sup>

From a historical perspective, image worship has almost certainly been adopted from Hindu *brāhmaṇ* culture, and it has not always been unquestioningly accepted as a part of Jain practice. In fact, there is no fixed canonical form of Jain *pūjā*, and various complex *pūjā* rituals have developed, especially since medieval times.<sup>5</sup> This proliferation has given rise to a number of reform movements. An early fifteenth-century Jain *Shvetāmbara* layman, Lonkāśhāh of Ahmedabād, an educated and wealthy merchant, whose followers became known as the *Sthānakavāsī* (hall dwellers), started a movement that rejected the traditional forms of external image worship as practised in the temples. In the eighteenth century, the *Shvetāmbara* and *Sthānakavāsī* monk Terāpanth, together with a small group of monks, separated from the main group of *Sthānakavāsīs*. Both groups exist at the present time, and are characterized by their rejection of the worship of images in either material or mental form. Both advocate a pure form of *bhāva pūjā*, of meditation and contemplation (*dhyāna*) on the *Tīrthankaras* without the worship of images. *Bhāva pūjā*, consisting of silent mental prayer, meditation and contemplation, is regarded

as the most spiritual form of *pūjā*. Over the centuries, other Jain individuals and groups, from both *Shvetāmbara* and *Digambara* schools, have also rejected external and internal image worship.

### **Buddhist Pūjā**

In Buddhism, *pūjā* is performed daily in monasteries and temples, and on other particular occasions. It is generally directed towards the image of a *buddha* or *bodhisattva*, with bowing, offerings and chanting as common features. Individuals also perform various *pūjās* in their own homes. Particular Buddhist *pūjā* festivals include: *Āsālha Pūjā* or *Dhamma* Day, celebrating the Buddha's first discourse; *Vesākha Pūjā* or Buddha Day, celebrating the Buddha's birth, enlightenment, and *parinirvāṇa* (death); and *Māgha Pūjā* or *Sangha* Day, commemorating the assembly of 1,250 enlightened *arahantas* in the Buddha's presence. Among the many forms of *pūjā* are the common *pañcopachāra pūjā* (five-offerings worship), the five substances offered being flowers, incense, a lighted lamp, fragrance, and items of food; daily, morning temple worship (*nitya pūjā*); *āmisa pūjā* (Pa. worship by material gifts); *paṭipatti pūjā* (Pa. worship by practice); *bodhi pūjā* (worship of the *bodhi* tree); and *dīpa pūjā* (light worship, usually with coconut oil lamps), also called *pahan pūjā*, and often as elaborate ceremonies performed to ward off negative planetary influences.

In *Mahāyāna* Buddhism, many of the *pūjās* seem to have originated from a formula of worship consisting of three parts. These are: confession of wrongdoing (*pāpadeshanā*); admiration of the virtues of others (*anumodanā*); and either accruing merit (*puṇya*) by performing a ritual and then dedicating that merit to the enlightenment of other sentient beings or a plea to the *buddhas* to 'turn the wheel of *Dharma* (*dharmachakra-pravartana*)' – to give out their teachings (*adhyeṣhaṇa*, requesting instruction).

Following a common pattern of elaboration and externalization in the development of religion, the threefold *pūjā* has evolved into what is known as the sevenfold worship (*saptāṅgā pūjā* or *saptāṅgā vidhi*). The name is somewhat misleading, however, since not only do the elements vary, but there may also be more or less than seven in any particular *saptāṅgā pūjā*. The seven elements, which are regarded as *anuttara pūjā* (highest worship), include: obeisance, prostration, and praise (*vandana*); offerings (*pūjana*) of flowers, incense, lighted lamps, perfumes, and food; confession of wrongdoing (*pāpadeshanā*); admiration of others; a plea to the *buddhas* and *bodhisattvas* to teach the *Dharma*; pleading with (*yāchana*) the *buddhas* to remain in this world, not to pass into *parinirvāṇa* (final *nirvāṇa* at death); dedication of merit; the arising of the desire for enlightenment (*bodhichittopāda*); taking refuge in the Buddha, the *Dharma*, and the *sangha* (Buddhist community); making vows (*praṇidhāna*); and sacrifice of oneself (*ātmayajña*). A sevenfold *pūjā* is a part of many *Mahāyāna pūjās*. It is often

practised at the start of meditation, and has also been adopted into tantric Buddhist worship.<sup>6</sup>

The concluding section of the final chapter of the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*, a well-known *Mahāyāna* text, contains an expression of this sevenfold *pūjā* in perhaps its most elaborate form. The *bodhisattva* Samantabhadra imagines that on each tiny particle (atom) of the universe there are as many *buddhas* and *bodhisattvas* as there are atoms in the universe. Worshipping before each of these abundantly populated atoms, he further imagines as many beings as there are atoms in the universe, each of whom is performing the *saptāṅgā pūjā*. With the spread of Buddhism throughout the Far East and its contact with local culture, a great many forms of *pūjā* practice have come into being, and there is considerable variation in the details.

Many chants and hymns of praise are sung during the performance of *pūjā*, as in the *Theravāda* chants:

With lights brightly shining,  
abolishing this gloom,  
I adore the enlightened one,  
the light of the three worlds.

With perfumed incense,  
and fragrant smoke,  
I worship the exalted one,  
who is great and worthy of worship.

This mass of flowers fresh hued and odorous,  
I offer at the sacred lotus-like feet of the noble sage.  
I worship the Buddha with these flowers;  
May this virtue be helpful for my emancipation;  
Just as these flowers fade, our body will undergo decay.

*Devotional Buddhist Chants, VDCH p.11*

Despite the prevalence of the many forms of *pūjā*, it is said that the best way to reverence and honour the Buddha is to practise his teachings of generosity (*dāna*), purity (*sīla*), meditation (*bhāvanā*, *samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*), i.e. *paṭipatti pūjā* (practice *pūjā*). *Pūjā* with offerings and chanting is known as *sakkāra pūjā* (reverence *pūjā*), and such chanting is recognized as being helpful in support of practice, so long as it does not supplant practice.

According to the *Dhammapada* and other early texts, the Buddha himself did not favour external worship. The greatest worship and sacrifice, he said, is worship at the feet of a true holy man. Mentioning the various kinds of Vedic sacrifices and offerings, the Buddha says that none of these are worth anything compared to just “one moment” of worship of a “perfect one”, a saint:

Though, month after month, for a hundred years,  
 a person should sacrifice (*yajetha*) a thousand times –  
 Yet, if for one moment he worships a perfect one  
 that worship (*pūjā*) is better than a hundred years of sacrifice.

Though, for a hundred years,  
 a person tend the (sacrificial) fire in the forest –  
 Yet, if for one moment he worships a perfect one,  
 that worship (*pūjā*) is better than a hundred years of sacrifice.

Whatever offering or oblation a man should sacrifice (*yajetha*)  
 for a whole year, for the sake of earning merit (*puñña*) –  
 Yet, all that is not worth one quarter  
 of reverence to the holy ones  
 which excels by far (all other worship).

*Dhammapada 8:7–9*

In the *Dīgha Nikāya*, the Buddha remarks to his disciple Ānanda that despite various external kinds of worship that are showered upon him,

this is not the way that a *tathāgata* should be respected, venerated, esteemed, worshipped (*pūjāya*), and paid the greatest homage. Rather, that monk, nun, layman or lay woman who keeps on practising the *Dhamma* correctly, and who walks perfectly in the way of the *Dhamma* – he or she is the one who respects, venerates, esteems, worships (*pūjāya*) and pays the greatest homage to the *tathāgata*.

*Dīgha Nikāya 16, Mahāparinibbāna Sutta, PTS22 p.138*

Hence, in the *Anguttara Nikāya*, he says:

There are two kinds of worship: in a material way (*āmisa pūjā*) and through (practice of) the *Dhamma* (*dhamma pūjā*). The worship (*pūjā*) through (practice of) the *Dhamma* is the better of the two.

*Anguttara Nikāya 2:43, PTS1 p.93, in “pūjā,” PBD*

### ***Hindu Pūjā***

Hindu *pūjās* are commonly performed in reverence of deities such as *Durgā*, *Indra*, *Lakshmī*, *Kṛishṇa*, and so on. Many of the deities worshipped are personifications of natural forces, such as the sun, moon, thunder and so on, who were originally understood as expressions of the divine power in nature. It is from Hindu *pūjā*, especially the Vedic and *brāhmaṇ* rituals, that Jain and Buddhist *pūjā* practices have originated, and many of the basic rituals are similar. Shaivite, Vishnaivite, tantric and other Hindu

schools have all developed their own forms of *pūjā* as variations on the same basic themes.

Tantric *pūjā* includes *devatā pūjā* (deity worship) – in which *pūjā* is directed to one's chosen, personal deity (*ishṭa-devatā*) – and *guru pūjā*, which is veneration of one's *guru* as an embodiment of the Divine, either in his physical form, an image or idol of him, or in his spiritual form. Like the *pūjā* of other traditions, tantric *pūjā* consists of commonly encountered elements. Sixteen such elements (*upachāras*) accompanied by the recitation of *mantras*, *prāṇāyāma* (control of breath and subtle life energies) and meditation are generally mentioned:<sup>7</sup>

1. *Āsana*. Seat of the image or idol of the deity.
2. *Svāgata*. Welcoming the deity.
3. *Pādya*. Water for washing the feet of the deity.
4. *Arghya*. Offering of unboiled rice, flowers, sandalwood paste, *dūrvā* grass, etc.
5. *Āchamana*. Water for sipping; the first of two such offerings.
6. *Āchamana*. Water for sipping; the second of the two water-sipping offerings.
7. *Madhuparka*. Honey, ghee and milk or curd, offered to the image in a silver or brass vessel.
8. *Snāna*. Water for bathing the image.
9. *Vasana*. Cloth for wiping the image.
10. *Ābharaṇa*. Decoration, especially jewels for decorating the image.
11. *Gandha*. Fragrance, especially sandalwood paste.
12. *Pushpa*. Flowers.
13. *Dhūpa*. Incense.
14. *Dīpa*. Lighted lamp.
15. *Naivedya*. Food offerings.
16. *Vandana* or *namaskāra*. Worshipful prayer or praise.

Speaking from a Hindu and yogic perspective, Swami Vivekananda says that external *pūjā* is for those who find themselves unable to practise contemplation or mental worship:

Every worship consists of prayer in the highest form. For a man who cannot make *dhyāna* or mental worship, *pūjā* or ceremonial worship is necessary. He must have the thing concrete.

*Swami Vivekananda, Notes from Lectures, CWSV6 p.110*

When performed with devotion, even ritualized *pūjā* will have a psychological effect on the priest and the worshippers, helping to bring them into closer contact with their mental idea of the deity or object of worship, thus



temporarily transcending the mundane world. 'Ināyat Khān describes and interprets the symbolism of this form of Hindu worship:

*Pūjā* is the name of the *brāhmaṇ* form of worship, which is from beginning to end a symbolical expression of what the seeker has to perform on the path of spiritual attainment. Before sunrise, the Hindu bathes in a stream of running water and calls it the Ganges, the sacred river, no matter what river or water it may happen to be. He then proceeds with flowers to the shrine of the deity. He puts the flowers on the deity, repeating a *mantra*; he stands to greet the deity, with joined hands, and prostrates himself. Then he rings a bell and repeats the sacred word; then he takes rice in his hands and puts it at the feet of the deity; with the tip of his finger he makes a mark with red powder, called *kumkum* (saffron), first on the shrine and then on his own forehead. After this he lightly anoints the deity with a certain ointment, whereupon he touches his forehead with the same ointment. Next he prostrates himself, before making three circles round the shrine. Then he rings the bell again, and the service is ended. Afterwards he goes and stands before the sun and does his breathing exercises, and that completes the next part of this worship.

However primitive this form of worship may seem, it has a deep meaning behind it. The bath in the Ganges signifies being purified before one makes any effort on the spiritual path. The purification of both body and mind is necessary before one takes the first step towards the God-ideal. One must not approach the Deity before such purification, outer purification as well as inner purification, for only when a person is pure will he find it easy to attain the desired presence of God.

The meaning of presenting flowers is that God is pleased with offerings which are delicate, beautiful, and fragrant. Delicacy means tenderness of heart; beauty of colour means fineness of character; and fragrance, the virtue of soul. This is the offering with which God is pleased. The worshipper holds the thought that his self is devoted in perfect discipline to the supreme will of God. His joined hands express no action on the part of himself, but complete surrender. The meaning of prostration is self-denial in the true sense of the word, which means, "I am not; Thou art."

Whispering the words and ringing the bell signifies that the same words ring like a bell in one's heart. Touching the red powder means touching the eternal life; and when he touches the deity with the powder, it means that from this source he will gain eternal life; when he touches his forehead with it, it means he has gained it for himself. The ointment means wisdom; and applying it to the god and then to his own forehead means that true wisdom can be obtained from God alone,

and that he himself has gained it. The three circles round the shrine indicate that life is a journey, and that the journey is made to attain his goal, which is God. “Every step I take in my life,” the *brāhmaṇ* thinks, “will be in His direction, in the search of God.”

The second part of the service, when he stands before the sun, means that God is to be sought in the light, and the breathing exercises weld that link of inner communication between God and the worshipper.

*‘Ināyat Khān, Sufi Message, SMIK9 pp.215–16*

Indian *sants* (saints) have attached no spiritual importance to external *pūjā* or worship. According to them, the best *pūjā* is internal worship of God by repetition of His Name and the practice of meditation. Maharaj Sawan Singh writes:

The word *pūjā* comes from the Sanskrit root *pūj*, which means to serve or praise some higher and sublimer being than one’s self in order to gain spiritual benefit. Nowadays, wherever one looks one finds only outer worship prevalent. Hindus, Muslims, Christians and Sikhs and those belonging to other religions are all engaged in outer worship. Churches, *gurdwāras*, mosques and temples are all religious places. In the same way, all religious books deserve to be venerated. But people regard bowing their heads and offering flowers before them as worship. The Sikh saints have written extensively on this type of worship.

*Maharaj Sawan Singh, Philosophy of the Masters, PMS3 p.58*

The writings of the “Sikh saints” and many others are preserved in the *Ādi Granth*. Among these writings, Guru Rāmdās says that those whose inner vision has not awakened are wallowing in ignorance. They worship lifeless idols and tombs by placing flowers before them. But their efforts have no real spiritual value:

The ignorant and the blind wander deluded by doubt:  
deluded and confused, they pick flowers to offer to their idols.  
They worship (*pūjeh*) lifeless stones and serve the tombs of the dead:  
all their efforts are useless.

*Guru Rāmdās, Ādi Granth 1264, AGK*

Kabīr says:

Worshipping (*pūj pūj*) their idols, the Hindus die;  
The Muslims die bowing their heads.

The Hindus cremate their dead,  
 while the Muslims bury theirs;  
 Neither finds Your true state, Lord.  
 O mind, the world is a deep, dark pit:  
 on all four sides, *Yama* ('Death') has spread his net.

*Kabīr, Ādi Granth 654, AGK*

And:

You murder living beings and worship (*pūjeh*) lifeless things:  
 at your very last moment, you shall suffer in terrible pain.  
 You do not know the value of the Lord's Name (*Nām*):  
 you shall drown in the terrifying world-ocean.  
 You worship (*pūjeh*) gods and goddesses,  
 but you do not know the supreme Lord God.  
 Says Kabīr, you have not remembered the Lord who has no ancestors:  
 you are clinging to your corrupt ways.

*Kabīr, Ādi Granth 332, AGK*

Gurus Amardās maintains that the best form of worship is that of the mystic Name (*Nām*) or Word (*Shabd*) of God, which is His creative power; but this is only obtainable from a *guru*:

It is so hard to obtain  
 that devotional worship (*pūjā*) of the Lord, O saints:  
 It cannot be described at all.  
 O saints, as *gurmukh*, find the perfect Lord,  
 and practise worship (*pūj*) of the *Nām*.  
 Without the Lord, everything is filthy, O saints:  
 what offering (*pūj*) should I place before Him?  
 Whatever pleases the true Lord is devotional worship (*pūjā*):  
 His will abides in the mind.  
 Everyone practises worship (*pūjā*) of Him, O saints,  
 but the self-willed (*manmukh*) is not accepted or approved.

If someone dies in the *Shabd*,  
 his mind become immaculate, O saints:  
 Such worship (*pūjā*) is accepted and approved.  
 Sanctified and pure are those true beings,  
 who enshrine love for the *Shabd*.

There is no worship (*pūj*) of the Lord, other than the Name:  
 the world wanders, deluded by doubt.

The *gurmukh* understands (realizes) his own self, O saints:  
 he lovingly centres his mind on the Lord's Name (*Rām Nām*).  
 The immaculate Lord Himself inspires worship (*pūj*) of Himself:  
 through the *guru*'s Word (*Sabad*), it is accepted and approved.  
 Those who practise worship (*pūjā*) of Him,  
 but do not know the Way,  
 are polluted with the love of duality.  
 One who becomes *gurmukh*, knows what worship (*pūjā*) is:  
 the Lord's will abides within his mind.  
 One who accepts the Lord's will obtains total peace, O saints:  
 in the end, the *Nām* will be our help and support.

*Guru Amardās, Ādi Granth 910, AGK*

See also: **abhisheka** (7.4), **ārātrika**.

1. See "pūjā," *A to Z of Jainism, AZJW*.
2. See "aṣṭaprakārī pūjā," "aṣṭaka pūjā," *A to Z of Jainism, AZJW*.
3. See "eightfold puja," *Religions, EBBC*.
4. See "pūjārī," *A to Z of Jainism, AZJW*.
5. R. Williams, *Jaina Yoga, JYMS* p.222.
6. See "pūjā," *Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism, PDB*; "ritual," *Encyclopedia of Buddhism, EBRB*.
7. See e.g. "pūjā," *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Yoga, EDYF*; John Woodroffe, *Introduction to Tantra Shāstra, ITSW* pp.97–98.

**qawwālī** (A/P/U) *Lit.* a song; from *qawl* (word); Sufi vocal music generally performed by an individual *qawwāl* (singer) or group of *qawwālān* (singers), usually with spiritual content; a form of Sufi singing in Urdu and Persian, prevalent in South Asia, especially North India and Pakistan, whose origin is popularly ascribed to Amīr Khusraw, a great court musician and statesman of thirteenth-century Delhi; resembles the Sufi song styles common in other parts of the Islamic world, such as the *rahīs* of Turkey and the *qaṣīdahs* of Arabic-speaking countries.

A *qawwālī* is one song which may consist of a single poetical composition or of extracts from different poems strung together into one whole, sometimes including a few lines composed by the *qawwāl* himself. An evening of *qawwālīs* will consist of a number of such pieces; after each *qawwālī*, there is a break and a different *qawwālī* starts.

The common themes of a *qawwālī* are mystical love and longing for the Divine, union with God, annihilation of the ego, and so on. Generally, a *qawwālī* opens with praise of the Prophet or a revered Sufi, continues with the themes of love for the Prophet or Sufi, and reaches a climax in a representation

of annihilation or extinction (*fanā'*) of the ego and subsistence (*baqā'*) in the Divine, followed by a return to sobriety (*ṣaḥw*). Verses and phrases of a *qawwālī* are often repeated with much emotional fervour and intensity.

A degenerate form of *qawwālī* has also become popular, in which the themes pertain to human rather than divine love, and the atmosphere of the gathering where such *qawwālīs* are sung is more like that of a fair or a party than an assembly of spiritual devotees.

See also: **qawwāl** (7.1), **samāʿ**.

**qiblah** (A/P) *Lit.* that which is placed opposite; specifically, the direction faced by Muslims during prayer; the focal point of the attention in prayer; in traditional Islam, the direction of the *Ka'bah* in Mecca, being the direction to which Muslims turn when performing the ritual prayer (*namāz*, *ṣalāh*).

In the earliest days of Muḥammad's ministry, the direction or *qiblah* was the site of the Jewish Temple at Jerusalem (*Bayt al-Maqdis* or *Bayt al-Muqaddas*). Though the Second Temple had been destroyed by the Romans in 70 CE, the site had always remained sacred to the Jews, and later to Muslims as well. The *Qur'ān* refers to it as *al-masjid al-aqṣā* (farthest place of worship).<sup>1</sup>

According to instructions given to the Jews in the biblical texts *1 Kings* and *2 Chronicles*, wherever a worshipper happens to be, their prayers should be directed towards the Temple at Jerusalem.<sup>2</sup> These two texts are probably sixth century (BCE) compositions, written after the Babylonian conquest of Judah (597 and 587 BCE), the subsequent Babylonian exile of leading sections of Jewish society, and the destruction of the First Temple in 587 BCE. According to the story told in the *Book of Daniel* – regarded by scholars as a third and second century (BCE) composition – the exiled Daniel, from an upstairs room of his Babylonian home, offered prayers three times a day in the direction of Jerusalem.<sup>3</sup> Even in present times, the Jewish custom prevails of facing Jerusalem in prayer, though it is not a rigid rule. The Hebrew term used for the right direction to face during prayer is *mizrah* (east), although – depending upon the location of the faithful – the direction may not always be to the east.

The Muslim *qiblah* was changed in the second year after the *hijrah* (flight) in 622, when Muḥammad fled from Mecca to Madīnah due to persecution. According to Muslim legend, one day, when Muḥammad was leading his congregation in the midday prayer (*ẓuhr*) at the mosque of *Banū Salimah*, he was spontaneously inspired to turn towards Mecca in order to complete the last two rounds (*raka'āt*) of the prayer. Since then, this mosque has been called *Masjid al-Qiblatayn* (mosque of the two *qiblahs*).

Though an important event, marking the emergence of the new community (*ummah*), it was not a complete break with tradition, but rather the

reassertion of a more local tradition. The Meccan *Ka'bah* is the earliest place associated with Abraham, the place where he is traditionally believed to have been commanded by God to sacrifice his son. Though the Sacred Mosque (*al-Masjid al-Ḥarām*), where the *Ka'bah* is housed, is now the most sacred of all mosques, in the time of the Prophet, it was simply a traditionally sacred place of worship, familiar to him since childhood. The change of *qiblah* is recorded in the *Qur'ān*, which explains that the purpose of the change was to test the sincerity of the faithful:

The foolish will ask: “What has turned them from the *qiblah* to which they were accustomed?” Say: “To God belong both East and West. He guides whom He will to a right way. Thus have We made of you a just community (*ummah*), that you may testify against mankind, and the Messenger may testify against you. We appointed the *qiblah* to which you were formerly accustomed, only to distinguish those who followed the Messenger from those who would turn their heels. It was a hard test, indeed, except for those whom God has guided. It was not God's purpose that your faith should be in vain. For God is compassionate, merciful to mankind.

“Often, We have seen you turn your face towards the heavens. Now We will turn you towards a *qiblah* that will please you. Turn your face towards the sacred place of worship (*masjid al-ḥarām*); and you (O Muslims), wherever you may be, when you pray, turn your faces towards it.”

*Qur'ān* 2:142–44; cf. AYA, KPA, MGK

The *Qur'ān* observes that the establishment of a *qiblah* is not something fundamental. It is only a matter of social discipline, since some direction has to be established and some rules made for prayer. God is everywhere, East or West, and responds to a devotee whatever direction he may turn for prayer. Fixing Abraham's house of prayer as the *qiblah* emphasizes that the mantle of Abraham's tradition had fallen on Muḥammad. It also serves to announce the emergence of a new branch of Abraham's people with their own customs, laws and revelation. True believers will not question God's decree to change the *qiblah*. Observance of the decree will test the faith of the followers in the Muslim fold, who are expected to follow the direction conveyed through the Prophet, with as much fidelity as Jews in the past had been expected to follow those given through Abraham, Moses, and others.

The *qiblah* is usually marked in modern mosques by a *miḥrāb* or prayer niche, though originally it was marked by a stone. To help those outside orient themselves, the *qiblah* is usually indicated by means of some ornamental structure such as a crescent moon on the peak of the minaret, whose two arms point to Mecca.

Accurate measurements have shown that many older mosques were built with inaccurate orientation, and although elaborate adjustments have sometimes been made, it is generally considered that the approximate direction of *Mecca* is sufficient. Indeed, if the direction is unknown then – also according to the *Qur’ān* – any direction is acceptable:

To God belong the East and West:  
Whichever way you turn,  
there is the face of God.

*Qur’ān 2:115, KPA*

The verse implies the age-old mystic truth that God is everywhere.

Since the majority of mystic practices start by bringing the attention to a one-pointed focus, the *miḥrāb* and the *qiblah* are commonly used in Sufi imagery. The *qiblah* is portrayed as the heart’s desire, whether spiritual or material. Hujwīrī says that turning to the *qiblah* is a part of *namāz* (prayers), and he speaks of an inward and an outward *qiblah*, “the outward *qiblah* being the *Ka’bah* and the inward *qiblah* being the throne of God (*‘arsh*)”.<sup>4</sup>

For many Sufis, the true *qiblah* is the divine Beloved:

The *qiblah* symbolizes the focus of attention of the heart. The true *qiblah* represents the face of God and Absolute Beauty, when, consciously or unconsciously, total attention is focused upon it, as referred to in the passage, “Whichever way you turn, there is the face of God.”<sup>5</sup>

*Mir’āt-i ‘Ushshāq, in TAT p.221; cf. in SSE3 p.101*

Sanā’ī says much the same:

The soul’s *qiblah* is the threshold (*āstānah*) of the Most High.

*Sanā’ī, Ḥadīqat al-Ḥaqīqat 1, HHGP p.68, HHS p.138, HHG p.113*

As does ‘Aṭṭār:

What is the *qiblah*?  
To see the greater signs of God,  
and to see His face in every particle.

*‘Aṭṭār, Muṣībat-Nāmāh, MNFA p.45, in SSE3 p.102*

And likewise Maybudī:

Granted that I have no *qiblah* in the world,  
my *qiblah* is the lane of the Beloved....

What good is the *Ka'bah* to me:  
 why should I cross the desert?  
 My *Ka'bah* is the Beloved's lane,  
 my *qiblah*, the face of the friend.  
*Maybudī, Kashf al-Asrār, KA1 pp.551–52; cf. in SSE3 pp.100–1*

And Rābi'ah:

My Beloved is with me always,  
 for His love I can find no substitute,  
 and His love is the test for me among mortal beings,  
 whenever I would contemplate His Beauty.  
 He is my *miḥrāb*, towards Him is my *qiblah*.  
*Rābi'ah, al-Rawḍ al-Fā'iḳ, AFH p.214; cf. in RM p.12*

In the spectrum of humanity, everyone has different desires. Consciously or unconsciously, says Rūmī, all are seeking the light of God, but most mistake the flame of a candle for the divine light:

Since the *qiblah* of the soul has been hidden,  
 everyone has turned his face in a different direction.  
 Like folk trying to find (the *qiblah* in the dark),  
 each turns in the particular direction  
 that they fancy is the *qiblah*:  
 But when at dawn the *Ka'bah* appears,  
 then it is discovered who has lost the Way. . . .

Similarly, the many kinds of people in the world  
 are fluttering like moths around a candle.  
 They attach themselves to a fire,  
 and circle around their own candle,  
 in the hope of finding the blessed fire of Moses,  
 by the flame whereof the tree<sup>6</sup> becomes greener.  
 Every troop of them has heard of the excellence of that fire,  
 and all imagine that any spark is the fire itself.  
 When the light of everlastingness rises at dawn,  
 each candle reveals what manner of candle it was.

*Rūmī, Maṣnavī V:328–30, 336–40; cf. MJR6 pp.22–23*

The world, therefore, is full of multifarious desires and limitations, and everyone has a direction to which their attention is turned. In a number of places, Rūmī gives a symbolic interpretation to the story of the Prophet's ascent into the heavens in the company of *Jabrā'il* (Gabriel). According to the story, *Jabrā'il*



can accompany Muḥammad only so far as the “Lote Tree”. In Rūmī’s interpretation, *Jabrā’īl* represents the human mind and intellect, which can accompany the soul only so far, after which the soul relinquishes their company:<sup>7</sup>

The *Ka’bah* of *Jabrā’īl* and the spirits is the Lote Tree;<sup>8</sup>  
 The *qiblah* of the glutton is a table cloth (spread with dishes);  
 The *qiblah* of the mystic is the light of divine union;  
 The *qiblah* of the philosopher’s intellect is imagination.  
 The *qiblah* of the ascetic is the gracious God;  
 The *qiblah* of the flatterer is a purse of gold.  
 The *qiblah* of the spiritual is patience and long-suffering;  
 The *qiblah* of form worshippers is an image of stone.  
 The *qiblah* of those who dwell on the inward is the Bounteous One;  
 The *qiblah* of those who worship the outward is a woman’s face.

Rūmī, *Maṣnavī* VI:1896–1900; cf. *MJR6* p.364

All material desires, Rūmī writes, are entertained by the *nafs* (the lower mind). “Although the *nafs* is sagacious and acute, its *qiblah* is this world.”<sup>9</sup> In reality, he says, there is only one *qiblah*, only one true object of desire; all duality and otherness is the illusion of the material world. Therefore, he counsels:

Let your eye and your heart transcend this bodily clay!  
 There is but one *qiblah*: do not see two *qiblahs*.

Rūmī, *Maṣnavī* VI:3218; cf. *MJR6* p.435

Al-Ghazālī speaks of three categories of people, distinguished by what they really take as their *qiblah*:

Know that men are divided into three groups, in turning towards what is their *qiblah*:

1. The people at large, who limit their consideration to this transient world. Of these the Prophet expressed his disapproval when he said: “No wolves attacking the sheepfold are more destructive to the faith of the Muslim than the love of wealth and honour.”
2. The second are the elect, who give their chief attention to the next world, knowing that it is more excellent and more enduring than this; and they do good deeds in this world for the sake of the next. But the Prophet showed how they are in error, when he said: “This world is forbidden to those who belong to the next, and the next is forbidden to those who belong to this, and both are forbidden to those who belong to God Most High.”

3. The third are the elect of the elect. They are those who know that beyond everything (in this world) is something else which also belongs to those things that pass away, and the wise man does not love that which passes away. These people are convinced that this world and the world to come are but the creation of God, and that the most important things in them are eating and procreation, which are shared with the brutes and the reptiles, and that neither of these two (worlds) represents a high rank. Therefore, they have turned away from both, and turned towards their Creator, who is the Author of their being and their King.

*Al-Ghazālī, Mi'yār al-'Ilm, MIG pp.11–12, in RJK p.184; cf. in GMS pp.33–34*

To many human beings, God is a nebulous concept, difficult to grasp or to make real. Since the *qiblah* connotes something definite to focus on, something that can actually be seen or faced, a number of Sufis have described their spiritual master as their *qiblah*. A saint is alive in a physical body. He can be seen, and a seeker can orient himself towards his master, towards following his master's teachings, and towards seeking his inner, spiritual form. And because a saint has attained union with God, orientation towards the saint will carry the seeker towards God. Like al-Ghazālī, Shaykh Shiblī describes the *qiblah* of three groups of individuals:

There are three kinds of *qiblah*: the *qiblah* of the common people, the *qiblah* of the elect, and the *qiblah* of the elect of the elect. The *qiblah* of the common is the *Ka'bah*; the *qiblah* of the elect is the throne (*'arsh*) of God; and the *qiblah* of the elect of the elect is the heart of one who is devoted to God – the soul of that mystic who looks upon God through the light of the heart (*nūr-i dil*).

*Shaykh Shiblī, in Kashf al-Asrār, KA1 p.405; cf. in SSE3 p.102*

The “common” man engages in ritual prayer with his face turned toward the *Ka'bah*. The “elect” address themselves to the throne of God (*al-'arsh*), the highest paradise, striving to reach the next world. But the “elect of the elect” are those whose *qiblah* is God and the perfect man – the perfect saint who is capable of bringing them to perfection. 'Irāqī says that in worshipping the “sun-like face” of the perfect man, the mystic steps outside the bounds of traditional religion and faces a charge of heresy:

We have made your sun-like face our *qiblah*;  
Alas! We have become sun worshippers again!

*'Irāqī, Dīvān 2629, KHI p.206, in SSE3 p.102*

Likewise, 'Aṭṭār and Bulleh Shāh:

My Beloved is both my *qiblah* and my *Ka'bah*.

*Bulleh Shāh, Kullīyāt, KBSA pp.26–27, SBSU p.289; cf. BSPS p.185*

Rūmī advises that once this *qiblah* has been found, all other seeking should be relinquished:

Since the Hand of God has manifest this *qiblah*,  
 henceforth deem seeking to be disallowed.  
 Hark, avert your face and head from seeking,  
 now that the destination and dwelling place has come into view.  
 If you forget this *qiblah* for one moment,  
 you will become in thrall to every worthless *qiblah*.  
 When you show ingratitude to him that gives you discernment,  
 the thought that recognized the *qiblah* will abandon you. . . .  
 For as soon as you part from this helper,  
 you are afflicted with an evil comrade (*i.e.* the *nafs*).

*Rūmī, Maṣnavī VI:2626–29, 2631; cf. MJR6 p.403*

See also: **Ka'bah**.

1. *Qur'ān* 17:1.
2. *1 Kings* 8:33, 44, 48; *2 Chronicles* 6:34.
3. *Daniel* 6:10.
4. Hujwīrī, *Kashf al-Maḥjūb* XIX, *KMM* p.386, *KM* p.300.
5. *Qur'ān* 2:115, *KPA*.
6. *I.e.* the burning bush (*Qur'ān* 28:29–30, *Exodus* 3:2–4).
7. *E.g.* Rūmī, *Maṣnavī* I:1066–67, IV:3801–8.
8. *Qur'ān* 53:14.
9. Rūmī, *Maṣnavī* IV:1656; *cf. MJR4* p.364.

**qiyāmah** (A), **qiyāmat** (P) *Lit.* rising or standing up; resurrection, doomsday, calamity; hence, *Yawm al-Qiyāmah* (Day of Resurrection); etymologically, related to *qiyām* (rising, getting up) and *iqāmah* (raising, lifting up), also conveying the sense of an uprising, upheaval, tumult, turmoil, revolution, an overthrow of the *status quo*, almost a revolt; depicted in the *Qur'ān* as a terrifying event. See **resurrection (in Islam)**.

**qurbān** (A/P) *Lit.* sacrifice; something offered to God, such as a cow, a camel, a goat, or a lamb; specifically, the Muslim sacrifice made on 'Īd al-Aḍḥā (festival of the sacrifice), the 10th of *Dhū al-Ḥijjah*; also, one of the rites of *ḥajj*.

Sufis have said that what needs to be sacrificed is the *nafs* (lower mind):

Sacrifice (*qurbān*) symbolizes the wayfarer's slaying of his *nafs* instead of a camel.

*Mir'āt-i 'Ushshāq, in TAT p.222, in SSE3 p.116*

This implies sacrifice of the individual self or ego:

The pilgrim occupies himself with circumambulation of the *Ka'bah*,  
and he runs and circumambulates as best as he can;  
But he falls short by offering another in sacrifice (*qurbān*),  
instead of himself in the way of the Friend.

*Shaykh Bahā'ī, Kullīyāt 1117–18, KSBA p.82; cf. in SSE3 p.117*

Ḥāfiẓ longs to see the face of the divine Beloved within, so that he can offer his heart as a sacrifice at that joyous “festival”:

When will the festival (‘īd) of the appearance of Your face come,  
so that lovers may offer their hearts and souls,  
as a faithful sacrifice (*qurbān*) to You?

*Ḥāfiẓ, Dīvān, DHA p.93, DIH p.179; cf. DHWC (135:10) p.279*

Ḥāfiẓ is referring to the *‘Īd al-Aḍḥā*, which is celebrated on the appearance of the new moon. But the lover celebrates seeing the face of his Beloved, likened in Sufi poetry to the new moon.

See also: **fidā’**, **ḥajj**, **‘īd**, **Ka‘bah**.

**raj‘ah** (A), **raj‘at** (P) *Lit.* return, restitution; the return of a divorced woman to her husband; a belief common to a number of *Shī‘ah* and related Muslim sects that some (or all) of their spiritual leaders, the *imāms*, will return to this world prior to the resurrection; refers particularly to the return of the twelfth *imām* in Twelve-*Imām* Shi‘ism.

Some *Shī‘ah* sects also maintain that some believers and unbelievers will also return to triumph or be punished before eternal reward or punishment is meted out at the time of the resurrection. This provides wrongdoers with an opportunity for repentance. Some more extreme groups believe in the return of all the dead before the resurrection. The notion of return contravenes the mainstream doctrines of Islam, although the return of the twelfth *imām* is acceptable on the grounds that he did not die, but is only hidden.

See also: **imām** (7.1), **resurrection (in Islam)**.

**rajoharaṇ(a)** (S/H) *Lit.* a small fan-shaped whisk broom, made of long strands of soft white wool attached to a short handle and carried by Jain *Shvetāmbara* monks and advanced laypeople to sweep the ground before them as they walk or where they intend to sit, in order to remove and thus avoid harming all tiny creatures; similar to the peacock-feather whisk broom, known as a *piñchī* (Pk) or *pichchhī* (S), and used by Jain *Digambara* monks; also used in some rituals. The broom handle is wrapped in white cloth, sometimes underwrapped with a red cloth embroidered with the eight auspicious symbols (*ashṭa-mangala*). The use of a *rajoharaṇa* seems to be an ancient custom. *Tīrthankara* images from Mathurā (in present-day Uttar Pradesh), dating from around the second or third centuries CE, include mendicants with *rajoharaṇas*.<sup>1</sup>

See also: **pichchhī**.

1. See “rajoharaṇa,” *A to Z of Jainism*, AZJW.

**rak'ah** (A), **rak'at** (P) (pl. *raka'āt*) *Lit.* bowing, the act of bowing; a round or cycle of prayer in Muslim ritual prayers (*namāz*, *ṣalāh*). In each round, there are three main postures: standing with head bowed; kneeling in a sitting position; and a prostration in which the kneeling worshipper bends forward, touching the forehead on the ground. Interspersed between the postures are recitations in Arabic from the *Qur'ān*. Before starting the prayer cycle, the worshipper makes an inaudible assertion (*nīyah*) concerning the number of *raka'āt* that will be performed. Once the *nīyah* has been repeated, the prayers must be completed as intended without interruption or distraction, else they are considered null. Each round or cycle (*rak'ah*) consists of the intention (*nīyah*), the *takbīr* (saying, “*Allāhu akbar*, God is greatest”), the standing (*qiyām*), the bowing (*rukū'*), the prostrating (*sujūd*), the kneeling (*jalsah*), the second prostration, and the salutation (*taslīm*).

The number of obligatory *raka'āt* required varies from two to five for each of the five daily prayers, to which voluntary *raka'āt* may be added, up to a maximum. The forenoon prayer, for instance, contains a minimum of two, a maximum of eight, and an average recommendation of four or six. Some devotees perform multiple *raka'āt* outside the times of set prayer, sometimes throughout all or part of the night. Some devout Muslims and Sufis, such as Rābi'ah of Baṣrah, are said to have performed one thousand *raka'āt* each day and night.<sup>1</sup>

The *raka'āt* and their numbers, as practised by Muḥammad and others, are mentioned a great many times in the *ḥadīth*, but although daily prayers are prescribed in the *Qur'ān*, the number of *raka'āt* is not specified.

See also: **adhān**, **namāz**, **nīyah**, **qiblah**, **ṣalāh**.

1. See al-Munāwī, *al-Kawākib al-Durrīyah* 1:95, *KDTI* p.266, *KDRM* fol.50b, in *RM* p.29.

**Ramaḍān** (A/P) *Lit.* great heat; derived from *ramḍ* (to burn); a description originating from the pre-Muslim solar calendar when the month of *Ramaḍān* fell at a fixed time of the year, during the height of summer. *Ramaḍān* is now the name of the ninth lunar month of the Muslim *Hijrah* calendar, during which Muslims are expected to observe a strict fast (*ṣawm*) from all food and drink, even water in summer, from sunrise to sunset. Sex and music are also forbidden, and abstention from all sensual pleasures is expected, as far as possible. *Ramaḍān* also refers to the fast itself and is one of the five pillars of Islam. Being related to a lunar calendar, the month of *Ramaḍān* regresses through the solar year, with the passage of the solar years.

The fast is broken after the evening prayer (*maghrib*) and a larger meal is eaten somewhat later. Long before Islam, the month of *Ramaḍān* was considered sacred in the Arab world and was a month in which the warring tribes kept a temporary truce, no doubt a necessary expedient because of the extreme heat.

The Night of Power (*Laylat al-Qadr*), which marks Muḥammad's initiation into the mysteries of the Unseen and the revelation to him of the *Qur'ān*, is traditionally believed to have been during the last ten nights (sometimes said to have been the last night) of the month of *Ramaḍān* in 610. The Night of Power is believed to be a time of close communion between the human and the Divine, when revelations, blessings, and divine favours can still be received from heaven. Hence, a vigil is often kept during the last ten nights of *Ramaḍān* as a re-enactment of the time of Muḥammad's first revelation. The first attempts of a child to fast during *Ramaḍān* are often during the festival of the Night of Power. *Ramaḍān* ends with the *ʿĪd al-Fiṭr* (festival of breaking fast), held on the new moon that signals the end of the month, a high point of which is a special congregational prayer performed by the Muslim community.

Various other beliefs are also associated with *Ramaḍān*. According to a number of *ḥadīth* (traditional saying or story), Muḥammad said:

When the month of *Ramaḍān* starts, the gates of heaven are opened and the gates of hell are closed, and the devils are chained.

*Ḥadīth Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* 3:31.123, *HSB*

And:

Whoever established prayers on the Night of *Qadr* out of sincere faith and hoping for a reward from *Allāh*, then all his previous sins will be forgiven; and whoever fasts in the month of *Ramaḍān* out of sincere

faith, and hoping for a reward from *Allāh*, then all his previous sins will be forgiven.

*Ḥadīth Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 3:31.125, HSB*

Another *ḥadīth* records:

(Ibn ‘Abbās said:) The Prophet was the most generous of people, but he used to become more so particularly in the month of *Ramaḍān*, because Gabriel used to meet him every night of the month of *Ramaḍān*, until it had ended. *Allāh*’s Apostle used to recite the *Qur’ān* to him. When Gabriel met him, he used to become more generous than the fast wind (which brings rain and well-being) in doing good.

*Ḥadīth Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 6:61.519; cf. HSB*

The effect of selecting a particular month for fasting throughout the entire Islamic world is impressive:

If a particular time had not been specified, the discipline would have lost all its value. It is due to the choice of a particular month that, with its advent, the whole Muslim world is, as it were, moved by one current from one end to the other. The movement effected by the advent of *Ramaḍān* in the Muslim world is the greatest mass movement on the face of the earth. The rich and the poor, the high and the low, the master and the servant, the ruler and the ruled, the black and the white, the Eastern and the Western, from one end of the earth to the other, suddenly change the course of their lives when they witness the tiny crescent (moon) of *Ramaḍān* making its appearance on the western horizon. There is no other example of a mass movement on this scale on the face of the earth, and this is due to the specification of a particular month.

*Muḥammad ‘Alī, Religion of Islām, RI p.361*

A number of exemptions or partial exemptions are allowable for reasons of travel or health, though these sometimes have to be made up later in the year. Childhood, health and travel are the three major reasons for respite. Complete exemption can be obtained if a person feeds thirty poor people every day of the fast, though in fact those of means frown upon the custom and seldom resort to it.

The sensual pleasures given up during the day are permissible at night, but excessive parties and celebrations should not be held. *Ramaḍān* is regarded as a period of spiritual and moral stocktaking, providing an opportunity for a regrouping of a person’s energies and thoughts – a worthwhile endeavour if *Ramaḍān* is used for that purpose. Since *Ramaḍān* moves through the year,

certain times of the year make it more of a sacrifice than others, the summer months being particularly difficult.

For the spiritually inclined, *Ramaḍān* is regarded as a month when God's grace is more abundant and closer, though abstention from sensual pleasures and overeating will make a person more receptive to the divine presence. Fasting is common to almost all religions as an expression of piety and religious faith. Jews fast for twenty-four hours on *Yom Kippur*, which occurs in September; Catholics are supposed to fast during Lent and take holy communion on an empty stomach (they are expected to fast for at least three hours beforehand); Hindus fast on *Ekādshi* (the eleventh day of every fortnight of the lunar month, making twenty-four fasts in a year).

The injunction to fast during *Ramaḍān* appears in the *Qur'ān*:

*Ramaḍān* is the (month) in which was sent down the *Qur'ān* as a guide to mankind, also clear (signs) for guidance and judgment (between right and wrong). So every one of you who is present (at his home) during that month should spend it in fasting; but if anyone is ill, or on a journey, the prescribed period (should be made up) by days later. God intends every facility for you; He does not want to put you to difficulties. (He wants you) to complete the prescribed period, and to glorify Him in that He has guided you; and perchance you will be grateful. . . .

Permitted to you, on the night of the fasts (*laylat al-ṣiyām*), is the approach to your wives. They are your garments and you are their garments. God is aware of what you used to do secretly among yourselves; but He turned to you and forgave you. So now associate with them, and seek what God has ordained for you, and eat and drink, until the white thread of dawn appears to you distinct from its black thread. Then complete your fast until the night appears. But do not associate with your wives while you are in retreat in the mosques. Those are limits (set by) God: approach not nigh thereto. Thus does God make His signs clear to men: that they may learn self-restraint.

*Qur'ān* 2:185, 187; cf. *AYA*

Being a time of spiritual renewal, many devout Muslims spend much time at the mosque in prayer, either by day or keeping a vigil at night, especially during the last ten days of the month. Inspiration is drawn from a traditional story concerning the Prophet:

ʿĀyishah (*Allāh* be pleased with her) reported that when the last ten nights began *Allāh*'s Messenger (may peace be upon him) kept awake at night (for prayer and devotion), wakened his family, and prepared himself to observe prayer (with more vigour).

*Ḥadīth Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* 6:2643, *HSM*; cf. *Ḥadīth Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* 3:32.241, *HSB*



Various other forms of devotion are practised. It is said that every day during *Ramaḍān*, Abū Ḥanīfah, founder of the *Ḥanaḥī* school of religious law, would recite the entire *Qur'ān*, once during the day and once at night. With one additional recitation during the *tarāwīḥ* prayers (nightly prayers, special to *Ramaḍān*), this made sixty-one recitations in all.<sup>1</sup>

Among the Sufis, these additional devotions commonly take the form of a month-long retreat, devoted to meditation, though some Sufi orders encourage the practice more than others. This time is regarded as an opportunity to annihilate the ego in complete submission to God. A number of Sufis have also indicated that for them, the real *Ramaḍān*, the real focus of their devotion, is the divine Beloved, not the outward ritual:

He is our sun and stars and full moon, he is our garden,  
and he is our *qiblah*, and fasting, and patience.  
He is our 'īd (festival), and *Ramaḍān*,  
and Night of Power (*Shab-i Qadr*), . . .  
He is everything.

*Rūmī, Dīvān-i Shams-i Tabrīz, Rubā'īyāt 317, KSD8 p.54; cf. in TSR p.343*

For love of you, life has become *Ramaḍān*,  
passing away between night vigils and fasting.

*Ibn al-Fāriḍ, Dīvān 46, Yā'īyah 13, DFQM p.8; cf. SVSL p.326*

Of the wine that they sell in the wine tavern of love,  
give me two or three cups, saying:  
“Let this be *Ramaḍān*!”

*Ḥāfiẓ, Dīvān, DHA p.144, DIH p.251; cf. DHWC (319:2) p.552*

See also: **Laylat al-Qadr, ṣawm.**

1. E.g. in Niẓām al-Dīn Awliyā', *Morals for the Heart* 4:9, FFNA p.218, MHN pp.226–27.

**rangihauptapa** (Mo) *Lit.* cloak (*hauptapa*) of the sky (*rangi*); the cloak of the *Rangi* ('Sky Father') and *Papatūānuku* ('Earth Mother'); according to Māori legend, a cloak that provided the “pattern from which all garments of this world were made” and “the belt that confined it was the origin of all belts of this world.”

Relating only the outline of the story, a group of female spirits from the underworld *Rarohenga*, “to which descend the spirits of the dead”, decide to visit the upper world. During the course of their adventure, they come across a certain Mataora, lying asleep in his house. When Mataora awakens, after

some confusion as to who his visitors are, he offers them a meal, during the course of which he becomes aware of the beautiful Niwareka, daughter of the chief Uetonga. They fall in love, are married, and live together happily for some time. One day, in a fit of jealous rage, Mataora strikes his wife. As a consequence, Niwareka flees from her husband, returning in tears to the underworld. The repentant Mataora follows after her. It takes a while for him to find her, but at last they are reconciled:

Mataora then proposed that they should return to the upper world together, but she said: “The ways of the upper world are ways of evil. Both realms have heard of our trouble; I will consult my father and brothers.”

Then came Uetonga to Mataora and said: “Maybe you are thinking of returning to the upper world to beat women?”, and Mataora was overcome with shame.

Then said Tauwehe, brother of Niwareka: “Mataora, leave the enduring world, the upper world, the home of evil. Hence we see all folk of the upper world eventually come to the lower world through violence and other evils. Let us dwell below; leave the upper world and its evil deeds as a realm apart from the lower world with its peace and goodly ways.”

Then Mataora answered Tauwehe: “I shall adopt the ways of *Rarohenga* as mine in the upper world.”

Said Uetonga: “Mataora, let us not hear tidings of a second evil act in the upper world. For look you, the upper world and its deeds of darkness is widely sundered from the underworld, which is a realm of light and benevolence.” ...

Now at last Uetonga and his sons allowed Niwareka and Mataora to return to the upper world. The former said: “Mataora, farewell; return to the upper world, but beware, least the evil of that realm afflicts us again.” ... As a parting gift, Uetonga gave to Mataora the famous cloak called the *rangihaupapa*, which was the pattern from which all garments of this world were made. The belt that confined it was the origin of all belts of this world.

*Elsdon Best, Maori Religion and Mythology, MRM2 pp.228–29*

When Niwareka returns from *Rarohenga* to the upper world of light, she carries the cloak with her. But once the cloak has passed through the entrance of the underworld, access to the underworld becomes closed forever to all living beings:

When the two of them reached the entrance to the underworld, Kūwatawata, the guardian of the entrance asked what items of the

lower world they bore with them. Mataora told him they took but his tattooing and the birds (given to them as guides). Said the guardian to Niwareka: "What is the bundle on your back?" she replied that it merely contained some old clothing.

As they passed on, the guardian said: "Niwareka; never again will the door of the lower world be opened to the upper world, but only downward to the underworld; only spirits shall traverse both realms."

Mataora enquired: "For what reasons?" The guardian replied: "You have the *Rangihaupapa* with you; why were you evasive?"

Here we see the reason why men can no longer visit the underworld. Never since has living man passed through the door of the broad way of *Tāne* to *Rarohenga*, only spirits of the dead can pass through, and so visit both worlds.

*Eldson Best, Maori Religion and Mythology, MRM2 p.230*

See also: **Rarohenga** (►1).

**raqs** (A/P) *Lit.* dance; among the Sufis, ecstatic dance, generally performed while listening to music at a *samāʿ* (music) gathering; metaphorically, the joyous ascent of the soul and the rapture resulting from annihilation of the ego-self; also as *raqs-i Awliyāʾ* (dance of the saints), where the intended meaning is entirely metaphorical, referring to the spiritual and inner not the physical and outer dance.

Some Sufis have pointed out that it is only when the soul is hindered in leaving the body, because of the strength of its attachment to the body, that the body "moves" or dances:

The soul desires to ascend, like a bird who wants to free itself from the cage. The cage of the body is its obstacle, therefore the soul gathers its strength and moves the body. If the bird of the soul is strong, it will break the cage, and go. If not, it will turn around in distress, and so turn the cage with it.

*Shihāb al-Dīn Suhrawardī, Fī Ḥālat al-Ṭufūliyah, FHTS p.24*

In this sense, dancing is an expression of imperfection in the soul's ascent. Hence, the Sufi saying, "*Al-raqs naqs* (dancing is a fault)". Many Sufis, however, do practise dance as a means of inducing ecstasy, although there remains considerable debate whether *samāʿ* and *raqs* are genuinely helpful in spiritual life. Rūzbihān observes, "Dance (*raqs*) is rapture of the spirit."<sup>1</sup> Hujwīrī is unequivocal in his viewpoint, though he also draws a distinction between dance and involuntary ecstatic movements:

You must know that dancing (*raqs*) has no foundation either in the religious law (of Islam) or in the path (of Sufism), because all reasonable men agree that it is a diversion when it is in earnest, and an impropriety when it is in jest. None of the *shaykhs* has commended it or exceeded due bounds therein, and all the traditions (*ḥadīth*) cited in its favour by anthropomorphists are worthless. But since ecstatic movements and the practices of those who endeavour to induce ecstasy (*ahl-i tavājud*) resemble it, some frivolous imitators have indulged in it immoderately and have made it a religion.

I have met with a number of common people who adopted Sufism in the belief that it consists of this (dancing) and nothing more. Others have condemned it altogether. In short, all footplay (*pāy bāzī*) is bad in law and reason, by whomsoever it is practised, and the best of mankind cannot possibly practise it.

But when the heart throbs with exhilaration, and rapture becomes intense, and the agitation of ecstasy is manifested and conventional forms are gone, that agitation is neither dancing nor footplay nor bodily indulgence, but purification of the mind. Those who call it “dancing” are utterly wrong. It is a state that cannot be explained in words: “Without experience – no knowledge.”

*Hujwīrī, Kashf al-Maḥjūb XXV, KMM pp.541–42; cf. KM p.416*

Rūmī is likewise clear that the real dance is inner and spiritual. It is the ecstasy arising from annihilation of the self:

Man, from the stinginess of greed, ... like a (performing) bear, ...  
keeps dancing (*raqs*) to no purpose.

Dance (*raqs*) only where you can break your own self,  
and remove the bandage from the wound of sensuality.

(Real) men dance (*raqs*) and wheel on the (spiritual) battlefield:  
they dance (*raqs*) in their own blood.

When they are freed from the hand (dominion) of self,  
they clap their hands (*dast zanand*);

When they escape from their own imperfection,  
then they dance (*raqs*).

Within them, minstrels strike the tambourine (*daf mī zanand*):  
at their ecstasy, the seas burst into foam (*baḥr ḥā kaf mī zanand*).

You see it not, but – to their ears –  
the leaves on the trees are also clapping (*kaf zanān*).

You do not see the clapping of the leaves (*barg ḥā rā kaf zadan*):  
for that, the spiritual ear (*gūsh-i dil*) is required,  
not the ear of the body.

*Rūmī, Maṣnavī III:94–100; cf. MJR4 pp.9–10, SPL pp.327–28*

Rūmī is using a wordplay. The Persian *kaf* means both the ‘palm of the hand’ and the sea ‘foam’. *Kaf mī zanand* can refer to both the clapping of hands and the ‘clapping of the waves’, in the sense that the dancing waves create sea foam.

Speaking of the intoxication of early morning meditation, a gift received from his master, Shams-i Tabrīz, Rūmī also writes of a dance that is clearly inner and mystical:

Bring the cup from early morning like the sun:  
for it has taught every mote of me to dance (*raqs*).  
*Rūmī, Divān-i Shams-i Tabrīz 3056:32537, KSD6 p.267, in SPL p.327*

It is the soul’s dance of love when it escapes from the body:

Souls bound in clay,  
when they escape glad at heart from their prisons of clay,  
begin to dance (*raqs*) in the air of divine love,  
and become flawless like the orb of the full moon,  
their bodies dancing (*raqṣān shavand*),  
and their souls – nay, do not ask!  
And those things from which comes the soul’s delight –  
nay, do not ask!

*Rūmī, Maṣnavī I:1346–48, MJR2 p.74*

The essence of this mystic dance has its origins, Rūmī says, not in anything external, but in the divine creative power, the “Water of Life”:

It is from the Water of Life (*Āb-i Ḥayāt*) that we turn in circles,  
not from handclapping, or the flute, or the tambourine!  
*Rūmī, Divān-i Shams-i Tabrīz 94:1045, KSD1 p.61; cf. in TSR p.216*

In fact, he says that everything in creation dances to the tune of this divine Decree. But while the dance of this world is visible, the music itself is hidden:

O my rose bower and rose garden, O cure of my sickness,  
O Joseph of my vision and lustre of my market –  
You are circling around my heart,  
I am circling around Your door:  
I am circling giddily in Your hand, like a compass. . . .

To the beat of the tambourine of Your Decree  
all creatures are dancing (*raqsand*);  
Can a single lute string dance (*raqs*) without Your Melody?

I think not.

The Voice of Your tambourine is hidden,  
and this dance (*raqs*) of the world is visible.

*Rūmī, Dīvān-i Shams-i Tabrīz 1458:15412–13, 15415–16, KSD3 p.217;*

*cf. MP1 (177:13–14, 16–17) p.148*

See also: **pāy kōftan**, **samāʿ**.

1. Rūzbihān, *Sharḥ-i Shaḥḥiyāt* 545:1305, *CPS* p.633, in *SSE1* p.179.

**Rawḍah, al-** (A/P) *Lit.* the garden; the name of an area in *al-Masjid al-Sharīf* (the Mosque of the Prophet) in Madīnah, which lies between a prayer niche (*miḥrāb*) and the tomb of Muḥammad. According to Muslim tradition (*ḥadīth*), Muḥammad said:

Between my house and my pulpit is a garden (*rawḍah*)  
of the gardens (*riyāḍ*) of paradise (*al-jannah*).

*Ḥadīth Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 3:30.112; cf. HSB*

Since the inner realms were commonly referred to as gardens in pre-Muslim times as well as in the *Qurʾān* and by later Sufis, the passage probably means that between the house of the body and the “pulpit” or throne of God, lie the gardens (*al-jannah*) or inner realms of paradise.

See also: **gardens** (4.1), **al-jannah** (4.1).

**relic** (L. *reliquiae*) Strictly speaking, the physical remains, or part thereof, of the body of a saint or holy person, preserved as a tangible memory for the purposes of veneration or protection; in practice, any body part or personal item belonging to or associated with a saint or holy person; a custom prevalent in ancient Greek religion, Buddhism, Catholic and Orthodox Christianity, Islam, Jainism, Hinduism, and some other religious traditions. Relics are usually housed in a special shrine known as a ‘reliquary’, which is visited, often as a pilgrimage site, by the votaries of that religion. The authenticity of the relics, especially those claimed to be of ancient origin, is often questionable.

In ancient Greece, relics – which could include weapons, clothing, furniture, and sometimes bones – were commonly claimed to be those of the well-known heroes of Greek mythology. Since they were deemed to bestow a power of protection from danger or conquest, the authorities in charge of cities or individual shrines were motivated to maintain that they possessed such relics.

In the Hindu tradition, the veneration of relics is less common due to the prevailing custom of cremation, and the belief that the world is an illusion. In Buddhism, relics (S. *śarīra-dhātu*, body part) are of considerable importance, and are generally housed in a stupa. Their purpose is said to be a reminder of the Buddha and his teachings.

In Islam, especially during its early centuries, the veneration of relics, especially those of the Prophet Muḥammad, was a part of the tradition. The Prophet's battle standard, seal, mantle, sandals, bowl, hairs from his beard, and two of four teeth that he lost at the battle of Uhud when struck by an axe, are or have been claimed as relics. Nevertheless, the practice has never been officially approved, and Muslim theologians have generally condemned the practice as idolatry and polytheism (*shirk*), in accordance with the Quranic injunction to "associate no partners" with *Allāh*.<sup>1</sup> Acceptance of the custom was especially diminished during the eighteenth century as a result of the reform movements of Salafism and Wahhabism.

In Christianity, the first-mentioned relic is the handkerchief of St Paul, which is said in *Acts* to be invested with healing powers:

God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul, so that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them,

*Acts 19:11–12; cf. KJV*

*Acts* also reports that Paul heals a man who had been crippled since birth,<sup>2</sup> cures a chief's son of fever,<sup>3</sup> remains unaffected by the bite of a viper<sup>4</sup> and raises a young man from the dead who, having fallen asleep during one of the apostle's discourses, fell out of a third-storey window and died.<sup>5</sup> Entertaining reading it may be, but in his letters, Paul himself makes no claim to the possession of such powers. In fact, he mentions a long-term infirmity from which he has been unable to find a cure.<sup>6</sup>

Nevertheless, a belief in the sacred nature of relics appears to have been accepted since early Christian times. According to the *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, the bones of Polycarp (*d.* 155), Bishop of Smyrna, were regarded as "more precious than precious stones", and were kept in commemoration of his death and as an inspiration to others who would share his fate:

We ... took up his bones, more precious than precious stones, and finer than gold, and put them where it was meet. There the Lord will permit us to come together according to our power in gladness and joy, and celebrate the birthday of his martyrdom, both in memory of those who have already contested, and for the practice and training of those whose fate it shall be.

*Martyrdom of Polycarp 18:1–3, AF2 pp.334–35*

The veneration of relics is endorsed by many Christian fathers of the first few centuries, including the fourth-century writers St Augustine, St Ambrose, Gregory of Nyssa, St Chrysostom, and St Gregory Nazianzus. Such veneration is deemed to enhance the honour of the saint, and it is believed that relics, being something material, help the devout to make a connection with the sacred, much as a keepsake reminds its owner of an absent loved one. Sometimes, relics are also said to possess a hidden, supernatural connection with the holiness of the departed saint, whose bones await reunion with their souls on the Day of Resurrection. Relics are also associated with miracles. Although saints, living or departed, do not themselves perform miracles, they are believed to act as intercessors, the miracles being performed by God Himself. Miraculous events have been and remain an essential criterion when it comes to decisions concerning the canonizing of saints in the Catholic Church.

The veneration of relics was condemned by the sixteenth-century Protestant reformers, and has never been accepted by the Protestant Church. Among the Eastern Orthodox Churches, although the altar cloth, even in present times, should contain a relic, the focus of worship is upon icons rather than relics.

The flow of relics into Europe from the Middle East as a result of the Crusades (1095–1291) increased the interest in relics, as well as raising questions concerning their authenticity and the means by which they had been obtained. Among the most treasured of these relics were fragments of the cross upon which Jesus was crucified. But authenticity had long been a significant issue. In the fourth century, St Augustine denounced certain imposters who, dressed as wandering monks, profited from the sale of spurious relics.<sup>7</sup>

The veneration of relics has not been without its challenges and counter-justifications. In medieval times, seeking to establish the correctness of the practice, the renowned theologian Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274) observes that it is even “lawful for one to wear the relics of the saints at one’s neck, or to carry them about one in any way for the purpose of self protection.”<sup>8</sup> He also speaks of the “relics of the saints, wherein the very persons of the saints, so to speak, are revered and honoured”.<sup>9</sup> In a longer discussion of the subject, he argues that since God “honours such relics by working miracles at their presence”, it is clear that their veneration is acceptable:

Now it is manifest that we should show honour to the saints of God, as being members of Christ, the children and friends of God, and our intercessors. Wherefore in memory of them we ought to honour any relics of theirs in a fitting manner: principally their bodies, which were temples, and organs of the Holy Ghost dwelling and operating in them, and are destined to be likened to the body of Christ by the glory of the resurrection. Hence God Himself fittingly honours such relics by working miracles at their presence. . . .



We worship that insensible body, not for its own sake, but for the sake of the soul, which was once united thereto, and now enjoys God; and for God's sake, whose ministers the saints were.

The dead body of a saint is not identical with that which the saint had during life, on account of the difference of form, viz. the soul: but it is the same by identity of matter, which is destined to be reunited to its form (at the resurrection).

*Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologica 3:Q25.6, STTA pp.4879–80*

Relics have been the subject of discussion and decree at various Christian councils. The Second Council of Nicaea (787) observed that any homage or veneration paid to a relic is really being paid, not to the inanimate object, but to the saint, and by extension to God Himself. The Council went on to decree that the altar in every church should contain a relic – something that was already common practice at the time. Even in present times, the instruction remains in the Catholic Church that, so far as possible, the tradition of placing relics of martyrs or other saints beneath the altar table should be observed. However, the absence of a relic is better than the presence of one that is excessively small or of dubious authenticity.

The Council of Trent (1563), while establishing rules intended to verify the authenticity of relics, decreed that bishops and other pastors should instruct their congregations to venerate the relics of the “the holy bodies of holy martyrs and of others now living with Christ – which bodies were the living members of Christ and ‘the temple of the Holy Ghost’”<sup>10</sup> on the grounds that they are a means by which “many benefits are bestowed by God on men.” Moreover, the decree stated that “veneration and honour” are also due to “sacred monuments . . . and places dedicated to the memories of the saints”. However, the council also stipulated that all superstition and the making of “filthy lucre” should be abolished from such veneration, and the “visitation of relics must not be by any perverted into revellings and drunkenness.”<sup>11</sup>

See also: **chaitya**, **sharīra-dhātu**, **shirk**, **stūpa**.

1. *Qur'ān* 4:36; cf. *Qur'ān* 4:48, 116, 6:22, 25:2.
2. *Acts* 14:8–11.
3. *Acts* 28:7–8.
4. *Acts* 28:3–6.
5. *Acts* 20:9–10.
6. *2 Corinthians* 12:7–8.
7. St Augustine, *De opere monachorum* 28.
8. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* 2:2.Q96.4, *STTA* p.3662.
9. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* 2:2.Q99.3, *STTA* p.3683.
10. *1 Corinthians* 6:19.

11. For many details in this entry, see “relics,” *Catholic Encyclopedia*, 1911; “relic,” *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 2012; “relic,” *Wikipedia*, ret. November 2017.

**resurrection** The rising of the dead on the Day of Judgment; in Christianity, Jesus’ rising from the dead on the third day after his death, celebrated at the Easter festival; mystically, the ascent of the soul from the body. Resurrection seems to apply only to human beings; animals, birds and other creatures are not included in the basic doctrine.

A general resurrection on the Day of Judgment is a religious notion originating in the ancient Middle East. The belief existed long before Christianity, being a tenet of Zoroastrianism. Mithraism, too, one of the most prevalent of the many Roman religions or cults and spread throughout the Empire from the Middle East to Britain, also taught the resurrection of the dead on a final Day of Judgment. It was also held by the Pharisaic side of Judaism, and St Paul – having been raised as a Pharisee – firmly believed in it, making it a part of his version of Jesus’ teachings in his ministry to the non-Jewish (gentile) world. Paul brings it into his letters on many occasions, and it is almost certainly he who is largely responsible for its presence in Christianity today. In later times, resurrection on the Day of Judgment also became a part of Muslim belief.

The term, however, also has a mystical meaning. A soul in a body is regarded as inhabiting the realm of the dead. For the soul to escape from the body is for it to be resurrected from the grave or tomb of the body, and to rise up or ascend to the spiritual realms. Perhaps it is in this sense that it was originally intended by Jesus. As the author of John’s gospel – writing figuratively and in metaphors, as is his style – has Jesus say:

Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming,  
in which all who are in their graves  
shall hear his Voice, and shall come forth;  
They that have done good,  
unto the resurrection of life;  
And they that have done evil,  
unto the resurrection of damnation.

*John 5:28–29; cf. KJV*

Either at the time of their death or during their own lifetime, those who hear the Voice of God, the divine Word, within themselves will be raised up or resurrected from the grave of the physical body. They are the ones who have “done good”. They will be taken within and will ultimately go back to God. This is the “resurrection of life”. Those who have “done evil”, who

have simply increased their load of sins will experience the “resurrection of damnation” – they will be condemned to rebirth in this world. They will be resurrected or returned to physical life in another body. Likewise, Jesus says:

Verily, verily, I say unto you,  
 he who hears my Word (*Logos*),  
 and believes on Him that sent me,  
 will have eternal life.  
 He will not be brought to condemnation,  
 but will pass from death to life.

Verily, verily, I say unto you,  
 the hour is coming, and now is,  
 when the dead shall hear the Voice of the Son of God:  
 And they that hear shall live.

*John 5:24–25; cf. KJV*

“The hour is coming, and now is,” says Jesus. The resurrection of which he was speaking could be experienced “now”. When the spiritually “dead” people of the world hear the “Voice of the Son of God”, spiritually they “shall live”. This is also what Jesus meant when he said:

Verily, verily, I say unto you,  
 if a man keep my saying (*logos*),  
 he shall never see death.

*John 8:51, KJV*

With the double meaning characteristic of John’s gospel, Jesus says that those who “keep my saying (*logos*)” – those who both follow his teachings as well as keep themselves in contact with the Word (*Logos*) within – will never “see death”. They will never have to suffer the ignominy and shame of taking another birth in this world. Otherwise, of course, Jesus and all of his disciples were dead within a few years or decades of when this statement was supposed to have been made. The intended meaning is evidently spiritual and mystical – not physical.

There is no doubt that many early Christians did not believe in a physical resurrection. In a number of Paul’s letters, for example, he speaks of other Christian teachers who disagreed with his interpretations,<sup>1</sup> though their side of the story is never told and the exact nature of the disagreement is difficult to determine. This was at a time in the 50s or 60s, comparatively soon after the death of Jesus, when some of his direct disciples would still have been living. They would have no doubt been far more inclined to believe what they had heard from their master than from Paul, whose position was

altogether dubious among those who were not his own converts. It is known, for example, that the Christian groups in Palestine – the Ebionites and the Naṣōraeans – did not countenance the belief. And they would have been the direct descendants of Jesus' local Jewish disciples. Some explanation of Paul's controversies is found in the *Acts of Paul*. Speaking of Paul's letters to the Corinthians, it reads:

There were certain men come to Corinth, Simon and Cleobius, saying: "There is no resurrection of the flesh, but that of the spirit only."

*Acts of Paul VII:1.7, ANT p.288*

The New Testament letter, *2 Timothy*, written as if from Paul but probably an early second-century composition, names two others who rejected the doctrine of physical resurrection:

Avoid empty and worldly chatter (*i.e.* intellectual speculation); those who indulge in it will stray further and further into godless courses, and the infection of their teaching will spread like gangrene. Such are Hymenaeus and Philetus; they have shot wide of the truth in saying that our resurrection has already taken place, and are upsetting people's faith.

*2 Timothy 2:16–18, NHL p.4*

The exact nature of the resurrection has remained a subject of recurrent debate in Christianity. Origen (c. 185–254), for example, did not take the belief in a crudely material sense. He considered that resurrection was a subject,

deep and hard to explain, and needs a wise man of advanced skill more than any other doctrine in order to show that it is worthy of God and that the doctrine is a noble conception.

*Origen, Against Celsus 7:32, OCC p.420*

Upon which he expanded:

Anyone interested should realize that we require a body (here) for various purposes because we are in a material place, and so it needs to be of the same character as that of the nature of the material place. . . . But in order to know God, we need no body at all. The knowledge of God is not derived from the eye of the body, but from the mind which sees that which is in the image of the Creator and by divine providence has received the power to know God.

*Origen, Against Celsus 7:33, OCC p.421*

Again, indicating that the more subtle forms within still bear a resemblance to the physical form in some respects, though of an altogether more spiritual nature, Origen writes:

It is necessary for the soul that is existing in corporeal places to use bodies appropriate to those places. Just as if we became aquatic beings, and had to live in the sea, it would be no doubt necessary for us to adopt a different state similar to that of the fish, so if we are to inherit the kingdom of heaven and to exist in superior (heavenly) places, it is essential for us to use spiritual bodies. This does not mean that the form of the earlier body disappears, though it may change to a more glorious condition.

*Origen, On Resurrection 1:22.4–5, OCC p.420*

Origen seems to be speaking of the ascent of the soul through what in modern times are termed the astral and causal bodies, and the soul's own innate 'garment' of light.

As might be expected, it was the gnostic or esoteric side of Christianity that characteristically rejected the idea of the resurrection as something crudely physical. The early Christian father Tertullian (*fl.* 190–220), who believed in an entirely physical form of resurrection, speaks reproachfully in his *On the 'Prescription' of Heretics* of the second-century gnostics, "Marcion . . . and Apellēs and Valentinus, who all dispute the resurrection of the flesh".<sup>2</sup> In another treatise attributed to Tertullian, *Against All Heresies*, though this text is normally regarded as pseudonymous, the writer says of Basilidēs, "the resurrection of the flesh he strenuously disputes, affirming that salvation has not been promised to bodies;"<sup>3</sup> and of Cerdo, "a resurrection of the soul merely does he approve, denying that of the body."<sup>4</sup> The same writer also lists a certain Marcus and Colarbasus<sup>5</sup> as rejecting the doctrine of a physical resurrection, though little else is known of them except that they also held gnostic views disapproved of by the heresy-hunting fathers.

To this inventory, Irenaeus also adds Simon Magus and Carpocratēs.<sup>6</sup> And the mid-second-century father, Justin Martyr, castigates "some who are called Christians, but are godless, impious heretics, teach(ing) doctrines that are in every way blasphemous, atheistical and foolish"<sup>7</sup> and "who say there is no resurrection of the dead, and that their souls, when they die, are taken to heaven".<sup>8</sup>

The list of names is only an indication of how widespread was the stream of Christian belief that ran counter to the strictures of those who considered themselves 'orthodox'. The consensus of these gnostic groups was that the resurrection was to be understood as an ascent of the soul, not the body.

One of the more explicit references to the spiritual and gnostic understanding of resurrection is quoted and paraphrased in the works of Hippolytus. According to Hippolytus, the gnostic writer of a Naassene document quotes from *Matthew* when describing the resurrection as the ascent of the soul from the grave of the body through the “gate of heaven”:

Again, he exclaims, “the dead shall start forth from the graves”,<sup>9</sup> that is, from the earthly bodies, being born again spiritual, not carnal. For this, he says, is the resurrection that takes place through the gate of heaven, through which, he says, all those that do not enter remain dead. . . . For he says, (man) becomes a god when, having risen from the dead, he enters heaven through a gate of this kind.

Paul the apostle, he says, knew of this gate, partially opening (revealing) it in a mystery (an allusion), and stating “that he was caught up by an angel, and ascended as far as the second and third heaven into paradise itself; and that he beheld sights and heard unspeakable words which it would not be possible for man to declare”.<sup>10</sup>

These are, he says, what are called by all, the secret mysteries, “which (we also speak), not in words taught of human wisdom, but in those taught of the Spirit”.<sup>11</sup>

*Hippolytus, Refutation of All Heresies V:3; cf. RAH pp.143–44*

A little later, says Hippolytus, the Naassene writer adds that only the inwardly pure can enter this gate of spiritual resurrection:

And into this (gate), he says, no unclean person shall enter, nor one that is natural or carnal; but it is reserved for the spiritual only.

*Hippolytus, Refutation of All Heresies V:3, RAH pp.147–48*

With such enticing fragments, relayed by opponents, the story might have been concluded had it not been for the 1945 discovery in Upper Egypt of the texts comprising the Nag Hammadi library, which has fortuitously furnished some direct examples of the gnostic beliefs concerning resurrection. The author of the *Gospel of Philip* is explicit:

Those who say that the Lord died first, and then rose up are in error; for he rose up first and then died.

*Gospel of Philip 56, NHS20 pp.152–53*

He says that Jesus did not die and then arise in his physical body. He ascended inwardly to the higher regions during his lifetime – and then died. Therefore, the same writer adds:

Those who say they will die first, and then rise are in error. If they do not first receive the resurrection while they live, when they die they will receive nothing.

*Gospel of Philip 73, NHS20 pp.188–89*

And also:

While we are in this world it is fitting for us to acquire the resurrection, so that when we strip off the flesh we may be found in rest.

*Gospel of Philip 66, NHS20 pp.172–73*

Whatever has to be achieved has to be achieved now. If a person does not learn how to rise into the higher realms during life, they cannot expect to suddenly acquire the ability after death. The author of the *Testimony of Truth* repeats the same thing:

Some say, “On the last day we will certainly arise in the resurrection.” But they do not know what they are saying. . . . Do not expect, therefore, the carnal resurrection. . . . They err in expecting a resurrection that is empty. They do not know the Power of God, nor do they understand the interpretation of the scriptures on account of their confusion of thought. . . . Those who do not have the life-giving Word in their heart will die. . . . We have been born again by the Word.

*Testimony of Truth 34–35, 36–37, 40; cf. NHS15 pp.134–39, 144–45*

He implies that only those who “know the Power of God”, the “life-giving Word”, and have been “born again” (spiritually baptized) can come to know what is really meant by “resurrection”. Other writers are also specific as to the nature of the true resurrection:

It is fitting that the soul regenerate herself and become again as she formerly was (*i.e.* pure soul, a part of God). The soul then moves of her own accord (becomes a free soul), and – for her rejuvenation – she received the divine nature from the Father, so that she might be restored to the place where originally she had been. This is the resurrection from the dead. This is the ransom from captivity. This is the upward journey of ascent to heaven. This is the way of ascent to the Father.

*On the Soul 134; cf. NHS21 pp.158–61*

The soul, he says, must regain knowledge of who she really is and must return to her original, divine home, the “place where originally she had been”. “*This*

is the resurrection from the dead.” It is also being ransomed from the captivity of this world and the true spiritual ascent through the inner heavens back to God. As another writer says:

But . . . the resurrection is the revelation of what is, and the transformation of things, and a transition into newness.

*On the Resurrection 48, NHS22 pp.154–55*

And:

We are drawn to heaven by him (our saviour, Christ), like beams by the sun, not being restrained by anything. This is the spiritual resurrection.

*On the Resurrection 45, NHS22 pp.150–51*

Resurrection, then, is the spiritual or mystic ascent of the soul from the body – not a raising of dead bodies whose atoms have long since been recycled by natural processes. In the *Acts of Paul*, resurrection in a new body is even equated with reincarnation. Souls are resurrected in the children of future generations, though the writer also adds that coming to mystic knowledge or gnosis of God is the true rising from the dead:

And we will teach you of that resurrection which he asserts that it is already come to pass in the children which we have, and we rise again when we have come to the knowledge of the true God.

*Acts of Paul II: 14; cf. ANT p.275*

Likewise, in the Manichaean texts, Jesus is described as the awakener of souls from the death and slumber of bodily captivity:

Come in peace, awakener of the sleeping,  
arouser of the sleepy!

You who make the dead arise!

*Manichaean Hymns, MM2 p.312ff., RMP bt; cf. GSR p.65, ML p.108*

Even the *Qurʾān*, which otherwise speaks of the resurrection of the dead on the Last Day, does not accept the physical resurrection of Jesus. According to Islam, Jesus was a great prophet, but it was only his body that died on the cross; his soul was raised to God. Speaking of “the messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, the messenger of God”, the *Qurʾān* maintains:

They did not slay him, neither did they crucify him, it only appeared so unto them. Those who disagree concerning it are in doubt about



it: they have no knowledge of it, except the following of surmise. For it is certain that they slew him not; no, God raised him up to Himself; and God is all-mighty, all-wise.

*Qur'ān 4:157–58; cf. AYA, KPA, MGK*

There are many other places in the ancient literature where rising from the dead and ascent to heaven are specifically identified as the spiritual ascent from the body into the higher realms and, ultimately, back to God. It was the belief of many in early Christian times that Jesus neither rose from the dead in his physical body, nor later ascended to the skies in a physical manner. If the disciples did see their master after he had departed, it would have been his inner, light form – a form so beautiful and pure, emanating so much love, that no soul who saw it could resist.

See also: **ascension, ascent of the soul** (8.1), **awakening** (8.1), **Day of Judgment, death** (8.3), **dying while living** (8.3), **grave** (6.2), **I die daily** (8.3), **tomb** (6.2).

1. *E.g. 2 Corinthians 11:4–5; Galatians 1:6.*
2. Tertullian, *On the 'Prescription' of Heretics* 33; cf. *TTSP* p.80.
3. Pseudo-Tertullian, *Against All Heresies* 1; cf. *WT3* p.261.
4. Pseudo-Tertullian, *Against All Heresies* 6, *WT3* p.269.
5. Pseudo-Tertullian, *Against All Heresies* 5, *WT3* p.269.
6. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* II:31.2, *AH1* p.241.
7. Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 80, *WJMA* p.199.
8. Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 80, *WJMA* pp.199–200.
9. *Matthew 27:52–53.*
10. *2 Corinthians 12:2.*
11. *1 Corinthians 2:13.*

### **resurrection (in Islam)** (A. *sā'ah*, *ba'th*, *nushūr*, *qiyāmah*, *maḥshar*; P. *qiyāmat*)

The resurrection is traditionally understood to mean the rising of dead bodies from their graves, or their reassembly from particles of dust, to join once again with their souls in order to face a final Day of Judgment. It is a dogma fundamental to traditional Muslim belief, as it is with Christianity and Judaism. The Day of Resurrection is mentioned throughout the *Qur'ān*, where it is explicitly portrayed. The natural scepticism surrounding a belief that involves the reconstitution of long-dead physical bodies is also addressed:

When they say, “What, when we are bones and dust,  
shall we really be raised up again in a new creation?”

Say: "Yes, even if you are stones, or iron,  
 or something you envisage that is even less likely!"  
 Then they will say, "Who will bring us back?"  
 Say: "He who first created you."

They will shake their heads and say,  
 "When will it be?"  
 Say: "It is possible that it may be quite soon.  
 On that Day, He will call you,  
 and you will answer with praises,  
 and you will think you have but waited only a little while."

*Qur'ān 17:49–52; cf. AYA, KPA, MGK*

No! I swear by the Day of Resurrection (*Yawm al-Qiyāmah*). . .  
 Does man think that We cannot reassemble his bones?  
 Truly, We are able to shape again his very fingers.  
 Yet man would deny what is to come, asking,  
 "When shall the Day of Resurrection (*Yawm al-Qiyāmah*) be?"

*Qur'ān, 75:1, 3–6; cf. AYA, KPA*

Mystically, resurrection is of the soul, when it is restored – with great joy – to spiritual life on escaping from the 'tomb' of the body. For most people, this may take place at death if they have lived a truly spiritual life in this world, but for the mystic it happens while still living in the body. Hence, Rūmī portrays the saints as *Isrāfīl*, the angelic herald of the resurrection. Saints are heralds whose "Voice" – the divine creative power – can raise "dead souls" from "their bodily graves":

Hark! The saints are the *Isrāfīls* of the (present) time:  
 from them comes life and freshness to the dead.  
 At their Voice, the dead souls in their bodily graves  
 start up in their winding sheets.  
 He (that is thus awakened) says,  
 "This Voice (*Āvāz*) is separate from other voices (*āvāz ḥā*):  
 to quicken the dead is the work of the Voice of God (*Āvāz-i Khudā*).  
 We had all died and were entirely decayed:  
 the Call of God (*Bāng-i Haqq*) came: we all arose." . . .  
 O you who are rotten with death beneath the skin,  
 return from nonexistence at the Voice (*Āvāz*) of the Friend (*Dūst*)!

*Rūmī, Maṣnavī I:1930–33, 1935; cf. MJR2 p.105*

Many Sufis, as a part of their Muslim faith, believed in resurrection in a literal bodily sense. Some, however, like Rūmī, may have written with a double

meaning to avoid charges of heresy. The judgment that is closely associated with the Day of Resurrection, for example, is as applicable to the time of death as to a future Day of Reckoning. As Rūmī writes:

On waking at the resurrection (*qiyāmat*),  
 there is put into the hands of a man  
 the scroll of his sins.  
 It will be black: headed with black,  
 like letters of mourning;  
 The body and margin of the scroll  
 completely filled with sins –  
 The whole of it wickedness and sin from end to end,  
 full of infidelity....  
 Such a foul and noxious scroll  
 does not come into the right hand;  
 It comes into the left hand (traditionally used for anal cleansing).  
 In this world also consider your scroll:  
 whether it fits the left hand or the right.

*Rūmī, Maṣnavī V:2151–55; cf. MJR6 p.129*

In this context, the “left hand” is regarded as symbolically unclean because it is the hand used, along with water, for anal hygiene after defecation. And likewise, Sanāʿī:

If then you commit a sin, that sin falls into one of two categories. If you think that God does not know, I say to you, “Well done, O thorough-going infidel!” And if you think that God knows, and still you commit it, “Bravo, impudent one, and vile!” For myself, I acknowledge that no man knows your secrets; but God knows – for God is greater than man.... So turn from this vile conduct of yours; otherwise, on the Day of your Resurrection (*rūz-i dīdār*, day of interview), you will forthwith see yourself drowning in the sea of your shame.

*Sanāʿī, Ḥadīqat al-Ḥaqīqat 1, HHGP p.39, HHS p.105; cf. HHG p.62*

In a story handed down orally several generations before being written down, Rūmī’s son, Sulṭān Valad, speaks of Rūmī’s assurance on his deathbed that all his disciples would be protected “on the Day of Resurrection”, something which could equally mean the day of their death. The “Great Master” is Rūmī’s own master, Shams-i Tabrīz:

Likewise, Sulṭān Valad recounted: “When my father was about to pass away, he said: ‘... Know and be aware that on the Day of Resurrection (*Rūz-i Qiyāmat*), we and all our disciples will be under the protection

of the Great Master and, because of him, all of us will reach God and, for the sake of the Great Master, God will have mercy on us all.”

*Aḥmad al-Aflākī, Manāqib al-ʿĀrifīn 1:50, MASA1 pp.47–48, FKG pp.36–37*

Other Sufis use the Day of Resurrection more as a cultural image than with the implication of any particular religious meaning. Often, it is used as a way of saying, ‘until the end of time’. Sa’dī uses it to mean that divine love is now so deeply a part of him that nothing can ever erase it, even unto the end of the world:

When I lift up my head from the dust of the tomb  
at the resurrection (*qiyāmat*),  
the fragrance of Your love will be found on the skirt of my soul.

*Sa’dī, Badāyīʿ 67:5, KSSS p.362; cf. BOS p.76*

Or, if he is speaking allegorically or with a double meaning, then he means that when his soul (his “head”) is lifted up from the “tomb” of the body (commonly described as ‘dust’ or ‘clay’), this will be his personal “resurrection”.

For others, there is no doubt that resurrection was understood to be entirely personal and spiritual. In *Mirʿāt-i ʿUshshāq*, the inner ascent of the soul is said to be marked by successive “resurrections”:

Resurrection (*qiyāmat*) symbolizes the turning of the wayfarer’s heart from the forms of illusory multiplicity to visions of the revelations of Majesty at the different levels of manifestation of the divine Beauty. At each level of manifestation which is directed inwards, a resurrection (*qiyāmat*) takes place and the phenomenal realm is constantly full of these resurrections (*qiyāmat*). It is in this context that the Prophet said, “One who dies experiences resurrection,” beginning with the wayfarer’s resurrection (*qiyāmat*) after voluntary death (*qiyāmat*), and ending with the great resurrection (*qiyāmat*) which comes about after natural death. As illustrated by this verse of Shabistārī:

This call is constantly coming from God:  
“Why delay your day of resurrection (*qiyāmat*)?”

*Mirʿāt-i ʿUshshāq, in TAT p.222; cf. in SSE3 p.192*

Al-Qāshānī describes three levels or degrees of “resurrection”. Firstly, “lesser resurrection”, which follows actual physical death; secondly, “intermediate resurrection”, which comes about by dying a “voluntary death”, *i.e.* leaving the body during life, through the practice of meditation; thirdly, “greater resurrection”, which consists of annihilation in God. While the first two degrees are acceptable within traditional Islamic theology, a spiritual interpretation of the “greater resurrection” is not:

Resurrection (*qiyāmah*) into eternal life after death is of three kinds. The first is the resurrection (*qiyāmah*), following natural death, into life within one of the higher or the lower levels of the intermediate worlds (*al-barāzakh*), which one depending on the way the dead person has lived his worldly life. For as the Prophet said: “As you live, so shall you die; and as you die, so shall you be resurrected.” This is the lesser resurrection (*al-qiyāmat al-ṣuḡhrá*), as indicated in the words of the Prophet: “When someone dies, his resurrection has already taken place.”

The second is the resurrection (*qiyāmah*) after voluntary death (*mawt al-irādī*) into the eternal life of the heart in the divine world. As the Prophet said: “He who dies a voluntary death (*māt bil-irādah*) will find the life of his essential nature.” This is the intermediate resurrection (*al-qiyāmat al-wuṣṭá*), referred to in God’s words (*i.e.* the *Qur’ān*):

Can he who was dead, to whom We gave life,  
and a light whereby to walk among men,  
be like him who is in the depths of darkness,  
from which he can never come out?<sup>1</sup>

The third is the resurrection (*qiyāmah*) after annihilation (*fanā’*) in God, involving true existence through subsistence in God. This is the greater resurrection (*al-qiyāmat al-kubrā*), which is indicated in God’s words: “But when the greater resurrection (*al-ṭāmat al-kubrā*) comes . . .”<sup>2</sup>

*Al-Qāshānī, Iṣṭilāḥāt al-Ṣūfīyah 446, GSTA pp.142–43; cf. GST p.98*

The *Qur’ān* also says that on the Day of Resurrection, God Himself will be seen:

Upon that day, faces shall be radiant,  
gazing upon their Lord.

*Qur’ān 75:22–23, KI*

Ni’mat Allāh Valī, drawing on al-Qāshānī while interleaving material of his own, adds two further categories: the continuous coming into existence of things in this world as projections of the Unseen and the traditional Day of Resurrection:

Resurrection is of five kinds. The first is indicated in the *Qur’ān* in the passage, “Every day he exercises power,”<sup>3</sup> and “Yet they are in doubt about a new creation.”<sup>4</sup> At every moment spiritual realities appear from the Unseen to the visible realm through manifestations projected upon beings and essences, and pass back into the Unseen. . . .

The fourth kind is the known resurrection (*qiyāmat*), which is due for everyone, as referred to in the *Qur'ān*, “And indeed, the hour will come; there is no doubt thereof.”<sup>5</sup>

*Shāh Nī'mat Allāh Valī, Rasā'il, RNV1 pp.371–72; cf. in SSE3 p.193*

According to a *ḥadīth*, Muḥammad was asked, “When will the resurrection (*qiyāmah*) come?” Holding up his forefinger and his middle finger together, he replied “I and the resurrection (*qiyāmah*) are as these two.”<sup>6</sup> That is, Muḥammad had himself experienced the reality of resurrection, and this experience was an essential part of him. Rūmī depicts a background to the story in which God says to Muḥammad:

O beloved, if anyone says, “Where is the resurrection (*qiyāmat*)?”  
show yourself, saying, “Behold! I am the resurrection (*qiyāmat*).”

*Rūmī, Maṣnavī IV: 1480, MJR4 p.354*

Rūmī relates this story elsewhere in the *Maṣnavī*, going on to quote another well-known saying of Muḥammad, “Die before you die,” which he interprets to mean individual resurrection or the rising of the soul from the body:

They asked him (Muḥammad)  
concerning the resurrection (*qiyāmat*), saying,  
“O you who are the resurrection (*qiyāmat*),  
how far off is the resurrection (*qiyāmat*)?  
And often he would say from within himself,  
“Who asks of the Resurrection (*Maḥshar*)  
concerning the resurrection (*ḥashr*)?”<sup>7</sup>  
Hence, the Messenger of good tidings said symbolically,  
“Die before you die,<sup>8</sup> O nobles,  
even as I have died before death,  
and brought from yonder this fame and renown.”  
Therefore, become the resurrection  
and thereby know the resurrection:  
This is the necessary condition for seeing anything.  
Unless you become it, you cannot see it completely,  
whether it be light or darkness.

*Rūmī, Maṣnavī VI: 752–57; cf. MJR6 pp.299–300*

Effectively, according to Rūmī, the Prophet is saying, “Do not presume to ask me about death – the lesser resurrection (*qiyāmat-i ṣuḡhrā*). Concern yourselves only with annihilation in God – the greater (spiritual) resurrection (*qiyāmat-i kubrā*), of which I am the essence.”

“Fame and renown (*ṣīt-u ṣawt*)” conveys a double meaning. *Ṣīt* by itself means renown or fanfare. *Ṣawt* means voice, sound or call, and is also used

for the divine Call or Sound. Therefore, the expression can also refer not only to the Prophet's renown, but also to the divine Call, which is brought to human beings by the mystics, and stirs them up from within.

This passage is in the last volume of the *Mašnavī*, as is another explicit observation concerning the spiritual nature of resurrection:

Seek to experience resurrection (*ba'th*):

do not dispute concerning resurrection (*ba'th*).

The condition of experiencing the Day of Resurrection (*Rūz-i Ba'th*)

is to die first, for the word *ba'th* (resurrection) means

'to raise to life from the dead'.

*Rūmī, Mašnavī VI:820–21; cf. MJR6 p.303*

See also: **nushūr, resurrection, al-Yawm al-Dīn.**

1. *Qur'ān* 6:122.
2. *Qur'ān* 79:34.
3. *Qur'ān* 55:29.
4. *Qur'ān* 50:15.
5. *Qur'ān* 22:7.
6. *Ḥadīth*, AMBF 356.
7. *Ḥadīth*, AMBF 356.
8. *Ḥadīth*, AMBF 352.

### **resurrection (in Zoroastrianism)** (Av. *frashōkereti*, Pv. *frashegird*, *rist-āxēz*)

According to Zoroastrian belief, evil will be conquered and destroyed, and the universe will be renewed – at which time the creation will be restored to its original state, heaven and earth will become one, unity with *Ahura Mazdā* will be regained, and the dead will be resurrected and judged (with individual salvation depending upon the nature of the sum total of a person's thoughts and deeds). The Avestan *frashōkereti* and the Pahlavi *frashegird* mean 'making (*kereti*) new (*frashō*)' or 'making wonderful'. *Rist-āxēz*, an alternative Pahlavi term, means 'the dead (*rist*) stand up (*āxēz*)'. Resurrection appears as a doctrine in both the Avestan and later Pahlavi texts.

The events and the nature of the resurrection are described mythologically in Zoroastrian scriptures, and it is through the influence of Zoroastrianism that such doctrines became a part of Judaism, from where found their way into Christianity and Islam. In Zarathushtra's *Gāthās*, however, which are the oldest Avestan texts, he does not speak specifically of a final Day of Judgment, still less of a time when the dead will be resurrected. However, he does frequently write of an afterlife that is intimately connected to the way a person has lived his life and of an accounting that all souls will meet at the time of death.<sup>1</sup>

The most complete account of the resurrection and the events leading up to it are related in the ninth-century (CE) Pahlavi text, the *Bundahishn* ('Primal Creation,' 'Original Creation'), written with reference to the earlier Avestan texts. The relevant chapter begins by relating that as the resurrection draws near, human beings – personified by the Zoroastrian Adam and Eve (Māshya and Māshyōi, Av. 'man and woman') – will revert to their original and more spiritual condition, a subtle state in which they live without the need for food:

On the nature of the resurrection and future existence, it says in revelation that just as Māshya and Māshyōi, who grew up from the earth, first fed upon water, then plants, then milk and then meat, men also, when their time of death comes, first desist from eating meat, then milk, then bread, following which, until they die, they feed only upon water. So, likewise, in the millennium of *Hūshēdar-māh*, the strength of desire (*āz*) will diminish, and men will remain well fed for three days and nights from just one taste of consecrated food. Then they will desist from eating meat, and will eat milk and vegetables; afterwards, they will abstain from milk foods, and then vegetable foods, until they are feeding just on water; and for ten years before Sōshyans comes, they will remain without food, but will not die.

*Bundahishn* 30:1–3; cf. *SBE5* pp.120–21

Subsequently, after the coming of Sōshyans – the last messenger or prophet – preparations are made for 'raising the dead'. The natural doubt concerning the resurrection, "How do all the dispersed elements of long-dead bodies come together once again?" is addressed in an answer given by God (*Ohrmazd*) to Zarathushtra (Pv. Zardusht). *Ohrmazd* says that for one who has created the miracle of creation, resurrection of the dead poses no problem:

After Sōshyans comes, they prepare for the raising of the dead; as it says (in the scriptures), Zardusht asked of *Ohrmazd* thus: "Whence does a body form again, which wind has carried off and water has conveyed afar, and how does the resurrection take place?"

*Ohrmazd* answered thus: "When through Me the sky arose from the substance of the ruby, without columns, on the spiritual support of far-compassed Light; when through Me the earth arose, which bore material life with no maintainer of the worldly creation but it; when by Me the sun and moon and stars are led along their way in the firmament of luminous bodies; when by Me corn was created so that, scattered about in the earth, it grew again and returned with increase; when by Me colour of various kinds was created in plants; when by Me fire is created in plants and other things without setting it alight; when by Me a son is created and fashioned in the womb of a mother, and the several



structures of the skin, nails, blood, feet, eyes, ears, and other things are produced; when by Me 'legs' were created for water, so that it flows away, and clouds were created which carry the water of the world so that rain can fall where it is useful; when by Me air has been created which, as one can see with one's own eyes by the strength of the wind, can carry aloft, as it pleases, that which lies below, yet one is unable to grasp it in an outstretched hand; each one of them, when created by Me, was more difficult to bring about than the resurrection, since their existence will be a help to Me in the resurrection, for when they were formed it was not a case of creating the future from the past.

"Observe that when that which did not exist was then produced, why should it not be possible to reproduce that which once existed?"

*Bundahishn 30:4–6; cf. SBE5 pp.121–23*

The original process of creation is now reversed. First to be resurrected is Gayōmard, the first man, from whose seed Māshya and Māshyōi grew like plants.<sup>2</sup> Then follows the rest of mankind, whose souls are reunited with the bodies they once inhabited:

First, the bones of Gayōmard will be raised up, then those of Māshya and Māshyōi, then those of the rest of mankind; and during the fifty-seven years of Sōshyans' ministry they will prepare all the dead and all men will be resurrected. Whether righteous or wicked, every human being will be raised up at the place where its life had departed.

*Bundahishn 30:7–9; cf. SBE5 p.123*

When they have all been resurrected, each will be revealed for what he is:

Then is the assembly of the *sadvāstarān* (righteous judges), where all mankind will stand at this time. In that assembly everyone will see his own good deeds and his own evil deeds; in that assembly, a wicked man will be as conspicuous as a white sheep among black.

*Bundahishn 30:10; cf. SBE5 p.123*

The account then continues, describing in some detail the apportionment of punishment and reward. The "righteous man" is set apart from the "wicked". The former goes to heaven (*garōdmān*) and the latter to hell, where for three days and nights he suffers bodily punishment.<sup>3</sup> Subsequently, with the falling of the meteor *Gōkīhar*, the metal in the hills becomes a river into which all human beings must pass:

As, in the celestial sphere, when *Gōkīhar* falls from a moonbeam to the earth, the distress of the earth will become like that of a sheep

when a wolf falls upon it. Afterwards, the fire and light will melt the metal of *Shatvaīrō*, in the hills and mountains, and that molten metal will remain on this earth like a river.

Then all men will pass into that molten metal and will become pure. For one who is righteous, it will seem as though he is walking on and on in warm milk; but for one who is wicked, it will seem as though, in the world, he is walking on and on in molten metal.

Afterwards, with the greatest affection, all men come together; father and son and brother and friend ask one another thus: "Where have you been these many years, and what was the judgment upon your soul? Have you been righteous or wicked?" The first soul the body sees, it enquires of it with those words. All men become of one voice and administer loud praise to *Ohrmazd* and the archangels.

*Bundahishn 30:18–23; cf. SBE5 pp.125–26*

Sōshyans and his assistants then sacrifice an ox, from which they prepare a special dish, "and give it to all men, and all men become immortal for ever and everlasting".<sup>4</sup> Doubts concerning the age to which each person is resurrected are also countered with the observation:

It is said that whoever was the size of a man, they restore him then with an age of forty years; they who were little when they died, they restore then with an age of fifteen years; and they give everyone his wife, and show him his children with the wife; and so they behave in the world just as they do now, but there is no begetting of children.

*Bundahishn 30:26; cf. SBE5 pp.126–27*

Everyone is then taken up to heaven, where they are given a reward according to their deeds, and take up a body suited to existence in heaven. And from there, they continue to move onwards:

Afterwards, Sōshyans and his assistants, by order of the creator *Ohrmazd*, give every man a reward and recompense that reflects his deeds. And this is a holy existence, where it is said that he is conveyed to paradise (*vahisht*) and, in the heaven (*garōdmān*) of *Ohrmazd*, he takes up the body it requires; and with that assistance he goes on advancing forevermore.

*Bundahishn 30:27; cf. SBE5 p.127*

Finally, *Ohrmazd* and His close 'companions', the *Ameshā Spentās*, deal with the various evil spirits. Only the chief devil, *Ahriman*, and his companion *Āz* (Desire, Greed) remain at large, and coming to this world, they are summarily dispatched by *Ohrmazd* Himself. Then the world is restored to a heavenly condition:

The renewal arises in the universe by His will, and the world is made forever immortal and everlasting.

*Bundahishn 30:32; cf. SBE5 p.129*

The account is remarkable for the manner in which it deals with the more obvious objections to the notion of bodily resurrection. It is also a more complete mythological representation of the doctrine than is found in any Jewish or Christian texts.

See also: **resurrection**.

1. *E.g. Zarathushtra, Yasna 31:14, 44:19, 51:6, 13.*
2. *Bundahishn 15:1ff., SBE5 p.52ff.*
3. *Bundahishn 30:12, SBE5 p.124.*
4. *Bundahishn 30:25, SBE5 p.126.*

**rist-āxēz** (Pv) *Lit.* the dead (*rist*) stand up (*āxēz*); the dead rise up; the resurrection. See **resurrection (in Zoroastrianism)**.

**rituals and ceremonies** A ritual is a prescribed or established form of behaviour, whether public or private. A ceremony is made up of a series of rituals defined by custom and tradition. Both are essentially external observances of a religious or social character, often considered mandatory for followers of that religion or members of that society.

Generally speaking, rituals and ceremonies have no part to play in the ascent or liberation of the soul. In fact, by attracting the attention towards the outer world, they may even hinder the soul's inner ascent. Nonetheless, the atmosphere of adoration, devotion, worship and reverence generated by ritual can have a powerful spiritual influence on the mind, as can sacred music or art. Many mystics, such as Teresa of Ávila, Mechthild of Magdeburg and others in both Christian and other religious traditions, have had some of their most profound mystical experiences while uplifted by the celebration of religious sacraments. Even the atmosphere or vibration in a place of worship can influence the mind in a spiritual direction.

Once the mind begins to move in an outward direction, however, and starts giving importance to the form of ritual and ceremony, the tendency is to place even greater significance upon the outer form, rather than to any inner inspiration that may be obtained from it. This can soon lead to disharmony and disagreement, which disturb the mind, to the detriment of the spiritual life. History makes it very clear that disagreements over matters of religion can rapidly escalate, not only into factions, cliques and schisms, but even bloodshed on a massive scale. Then the very basics of spiritual life – of love,

humility, forgiveness and so on, as well as interior prayer or contemplation – are automatically swept aside, and God becomes a mere conceptual figurehead; part of a belief system and often of a complex theology, rather than a personal experience at the heart of one's life and being.

Only a great soul can rise above the outer form, and benefit from the spiritual longing that inspires religious ritual. Even when outer religious life is proceeding smoothly and harmoniously, without spiritual yearning it is very easy to get carried away with the outer form to such an extent that the mind and soul are unable to elevate themselves in solitude and personal interior prayer. Used as a means of personal spiritual uplift, there is perhaps no spiritual harm in public ritual and ceremony. But the attraction of the pageantry, the ceremonial form, the priestly robes, the atmospheric lighting, the sacred architecture, the chanting and the prayer all have a tendency to hold the mind in an outward-facing direction. They become an outer prop or focus, in the absence of which the mind loses its sense of spiritual direction. For spiritual progress in which the soul learns to withdraw from the body, and ascend to higher realms, a previously unprecedented degree of individual focus is required. Anything of this world, however beautiful or majestic, even private rituals performed by a individual, can hold the soul down, and hinder its onward progress.

There are a number of places in the canonical gospels where Jesus makes his views clear concerning the relative importance of the religious rituals performed in his own time and country. He speaks, for example, of fasting, prayer and giving alms in secret,<sup>1</sup> indicating that public prayer and fasting have no spiritual value. Likewise, he says explicitly that he regards forgiveness and love between people to be of far greater importance than performing rituals before the temple altar:

If you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.

*Matthew 5:23–24; cf. KJV*

Naturally, there are many aspects to the topic, and individuals differ both in temperament and circumstances. It is doubtful that Jesus would have recommended a course of action that would have led his disciples into family or social disharmony by their refusing involvement in the religious customs and ceremonies of the time. But he would no doubt have advised them to bear in mind their spiritual priorities.

A number of later Christians, while not condemning the rituals and ceremonies of their faith, have nevertheless indicated that the simple spiritual essence of things should not be forgotten. The author of the *Cloud of Unknowing* is

scathing of those who are more concerned about the correct performance of ritual, and how they appear to others, than the quality of their own thoughts:

There are those who channel all their energies, inner and outer, into learning how to speak weightily and to how to support their insecurity with servile whimperings and affectations of devotion. They are more anxious to seem holy in the sight of men than in the sight of God and His angels. Why, these folk will worry and grieve more over a mistaken gesture, or the speaking of an unseemly or unsuitable word than they will for a thousand vain thoughts or nauseating and sinful impulses, which they have deliberately gathered to themselves, or recklessly indulged in, in the presence of God and the saints and angels in heaven.

*Cloud of Unknowing* 54; cf. *CU* p.106, *CUCW* pp.125–26, *CUEU* p.212

John of the Cross rails at some length against those who invent additional ceremonies, thinking that this will take them closer to God, when all that is needed is “simplicity of faith”:

The great reliance which some persons place in many kinds of ceremonies introduced by uninstructed persons who lack the simplicity of faith is intolerable. . . . I wish to speak solely of those ceremonies into which enters nothing of a suspicious nature, and of which many people make use nowadays with indiscreet devotion, attributing such efficacy and faith to these ways and manners wherein they desire to perform their devotions and prayers, that they believe that, if they fail to the very slightest extent in them, or go beyond their limits, God will not be served by them, nor will He hear them. They place more reliance upon these methods and kinds of ceremony than upon the reality of their prayer.

*John of the Cross, Ascent of Mount Carmel* 3:43.1–2, *CWJCI* pp.307–8

He then goes on to list the kind of ceremonial details of which he is speaking:

I refer, for example, to a mass at which there must be so many candles, neither more nor fewer; which has to be said by the priest in such or such a way; and must be at such or such an hour, and neither sooner nor later; and must be after a certain day, and neither sooner nor later; and the prayers and stations must be made at such and such times, with such or such ceremonies, and neither sooner nor later nor in any other manner; and the person who makes them must have such or such qualities or qualifications. . . . Let these persons, then, know that, the more reliance they place on these things and ceremonies, the

less confidence they have in God, and that they will not obtain of God that which they desire.

*John of the Cross, Ascent of Mount Carmel 3:43.2, 44.1, CWJCI pp.308–9*

He also points out that, according to the gospels, Jesus kept prayer very simple, and devoid of ceremony:

With regard to further ceremonies connected with prayer and other devotions, let not the will be set upon other ceremonies and forms of prayer than those which Christ taught us. For it is clear that, when his disciples besought him that he would teach them to pray, he would tell them all that is necessary in order that the eternal Father may hear us, since he knew the Father's nature so well. Yet all that he taught them was the *Paternoster* (the Lord's Prayer), with its seven petitions, wherein are included all our needs, both spiritual and temporal; and he taught them not many other kinds of prayer, either in words or in ceremonies.

*John of the Cross, Ascent of Mount Carmel 3:44.4, CWJCI pp.310–11*

Simplicity of prayer and spiritual life is an oft-repeated refrain. Allison Peers, writing of a book, the *Road and Door to Prayer*, by the Spaniard, Diego Perez de Valdivia (c.1510–1589), says that it is written with “an engaging simplicity. . . . Full of the spirit of mysticism, it esteems forms not for what they are, but for what they symbolize. ‘Ceremonies,’ it lays down, for example, ‘must not be given up, but yet one’s principal care must be about the heart.’”<sup>2</sup> Prayer, adds de Valdivia in another work, is no “inaccessible mountain”, but should be “without ceremony, plain and simple”, coming “principally from the heart”.<sup>3</sup> It is also his opinion that one can do the will of God “without being a great contemplative”.<sup>4</sup>

It must be admitted that the majority of people who follow social and religious ritual do so with little thought as to its meaning, origins, or relevance. This was as true in times past as nowadays. Thus Seneca, a first-century (CE) Roman philosopher and statesman, while disparaging the Jews, goes on to admit that, while the Jews “at least . . . know the origins of their ceremonies”, most of his own compatriots know nothing of the origins of their own religious rituals:

At least they (the Jews) know the origins of their ceremonies: the greater part of our people have no idea of the reason for the things they do.

*Seneca, in City of God 6:11, CGAP p.252*

The basic idea behind rituals may sometimes be reasonable, but the practice falls short of efficacy. The third-century Iranian mystic Mānī, who was

raised in the baptist sect of the Judaeo-Christian Elkaisites, is speaking of rituals when he writes of the Elkaisite ritual ablutions of food and body. The body, he points out, is essentially impure, and no amount of ritual washing will remedy the situation. It is the essential purity of the soul that must be rediscovered:

When I saw what they were thinking, I said to them gently, “There is no value in this ritual washing with which you cleanse your food. For this body is impure and is formed by an impure moulding. You can see how when someone purifies his food, and then partakes of it after it has been ritually washed, it is apparent that from it still come blood, bile, burps, and shameful excrement and the impurity of the body. . . . The purity, then, which was spoken of, is that which comes through *gnōsis*, a separation of light from darkness, of death from life, of living waters from turbid.”

*Cologne Mānī Codex 80–81, 84; cf. CMCB pp.64–67, in MLRE p.35*

See also: **fasting, prayer** (8.5).

1. *Matthew* 6:1–6, 16–18.
2. Pérez de Valdivia, *Camino y puerta* 1:41, in *SSM3* p.108.
3. Pérez de Valdivia, *Documentos saludables, DSPV* fols.132r, 130r, in *SSM3* p.108.
4. Pérez de Valdivia, *Documentos saludables, DSPV* fols.130v, in *SSM3* p.108.

**rlung rta** (T) *Lit.* wind (*rlung*) horse (*rta*); a swift and powerful mythical creature from pre-Buddhist Tibet, a symbol of good fortune, possessing the speed of the wind and the strength of a horse, and able to convey prayers to heaven; hence, luck, good fortune, well-being; by extension, a prayer flag, which characteristically has an image of the windhorse in its centre; a square or rectangular, coloured, cloth flag, a characteristic of Tibetan Buddhism, signifying luck and good fortune for oneself and others as it flutters in the wind.

The flag is usually made of coloured cloth, roughly twelve inches square, woodblock printed in black ink in a variety of designs, generally including one or more pictures of deities or auspicious symbols, usually in the middle, surrounded by *mantras* and personal prayers. The corners of the flag are each decorated with creatures that symbolize the four directions to which the prayers and *mantras* are to be carried: the white tiger, the dragon, the snow lion, and *Garuḍa* – a mythical, brightly illumined bird, associated with the sun and fire. *Garuḍa* is an Indian mythological creature known in Tibet as *Kyung*. Prayer flags are generally of five colours: blue, white, red, green and yellow, strung in that order either from right to left or left to right.

Originally a symbol of Tibetan folk religion, the windhorse has gradually acquired a Buddhist character. In Buddhist tradition, the central image of a prayer flag is the windhorse itself, bearing the *triratna* (three jewels, three refuges) of the Buddha, the *Dharma* (his path and teaching) and the *sangha* (community of those who practise the *Dharma*) on its back. Around this are numerous *mantras*, as many as four hundred, each dedicated to particular celestial beings in the Tibetan Buddhist pantheon, including various celestial *buddhas*, *bodhisattvas*, and other deities.

A modern interpretation of the symbolism maintains that the five colours of the flags represent the five elements (*mahābhūtas*) of space (blue), air (white), fire (red), water (green), and earth (yellow). They are also said to correspond to the five pure lights (*'od lnga*) of the *Dzogchen* school of Tibetan Buddhism. Additionally, the windhorse itself is said to symbolize the element of space, which is the ground of being in which the other four elements exist. In this interpretation, the animals in the four corners of the flag are said to represent the four elements: the white tiger (air), the dragon (water), the snow lion (earth), and *Garuda* (fire).<sup>1</sup> However, symbolic or mythological interpretations of these four creatures are very rarely found in Tibetan tradition, and even in those instances their roles are specific to the myth being related. In one thirteenth-century myth, the snow lion is replaced by a yak.<sup>2</sup>

Strings and streamers of prayer flags are commonly strung like bunting, often in profusion, from the roof tops of homes and monasteries, along mountain ridges, from hilltop to hilltop, from tree to tree, and so on. It is believed that when the flags flutter in the wind, the air is purified, and the *mantras* and prayers written on the flags are activated and carried by the wind to benefit the one who installed them as well as everyone else in the neighbourhood. The installation of such flags is believed to be good *karma* and results in the acquisition of merit (*puṇya*) for those involved.

The origin of Tibetan prayer flags (though not the windhorse) was probably Nepal, where *sūtras* were written on cloth banners, used to 'transmit' their contents to other parts of the world. The custom probably arrived in Tibet during the heyday of tantric transmission from North India and Nepal, some time between the eighth and the eleventh centuries, and evolved into the well-known prayer flag. During the steady erosion of Tibetan culture and autonomy by the Chinese during the cultural revolution, prayer flags were discouraged, but in present times they have regained their popularity.

There are two kinds of prayer flag – *rlung rta* and *dar lcog* (flagstaff). The former are strung on horizontal or sloping strings; the latter, which are larger rectangles, are tied to a vertical pole like conventional flags. Both are located in key locations such as mountain tops, cairns, rooftops, and so on.

1. See e.g. "Lungta," *rigpawiki.org*, ret. November 2015.

2. See Samten Karmay, *The Arrow and the Spindle*, ASK1 pp.420–21.



**rosary** A sequence of prayers counted on a string of beads or knotted cord; hence, the string of beads or knotted cord itself; a prayer cord, a prayer rope, a chaplet, the use of which is known as ‘telling’ or ‘saying’ a rosary; a practice common to Hindu, Buddhist, Christian, and Muslim traditions; from the Latin *rosarium* (rose garden), an expression for a collection of things deemed precious; known in Islam as a *tasbeḥ* (glorification).

Telling a rosary was first introduced into Christianity in the third century by monks of the Eastern Church, where it has remained an almost exclusively monastic practice. The Eastern Orthodox *kombologion* or *komboschoinion* of Greece and Turkey has one hundred equally sized pips or beads or, more commonly, a cord, often of wool, tied in a series of complex and symbolic knots. The repetition of each prayer may be preceded and ended with a bow or sign of the cross, giving the rosary the alternative name of the *metanie* (reverence).

The *vertitza* (string), *tchotki* (chaplet) or *lievstoka* (ladder) of the Russian Orthodox tradition consists of one hundred and three beads divided by four larger beads into four unequal sections. Rosaries or *lievstokas* are also made in leather, with steps rather than beads, like the symbolic ladder of ascent to heaven. The prayer most commonly repeated is the Jesus prayer, normally counted by the hundred, though other prayers are also used. Rosaries, and the ways they are used, vary from place to place.

In Catholicism, the rosary spread beyond the monasteries to become a popular means of both public and private prayer. In its commonest form, the rosary of the Blessed Virgin Mary, small beads are arranged in five or fifteen sets of ten (decades), each set separated from the others by a larger bead. Each rosary or chaplet thus contains fifty-five or one hundred and sixty-five beads. The two ends are joined by a string holding a crucifix, two large beads, and three small beads. A complete prayer cycle requires three full turns around the rosary or chaplet.

Each decade of *Ave Marias* (Hail Marys) generally begins with a *Pater-noster* (Lord’s Prayer) and ends with a *Gloria* (Glory be to the Father, etc.), though there are variations. For this reason, the large beads separating the decades are known as *paternosters*. Each decade may be accompanied by a meditation or mystery, comprising events from the life, death, and glorification of Jesus and the Blessed Virgin. The fifteen meditations are divided into three sets of five: the joyful, the sorrowful, and the glorious.

The rosary of the Blessed Virgin is of uncertain origin, though it has been associated with the thirteenth-century St Dominic, founder of the Dominicans. According to tradition, the saint was told by the Blessed Virgin to instruct people in the use of the rosary to provide protection from the Albigensian ‘heresy’ that was widespread around Toulouse at that time. There is historical evidence, however, that the repetition of multiple *Ave Marias* preceded St Dominic. In the fifteenth century, the rosary of the Blessed Virgin became

popular among lay people through the teaching of the Dominican, Alan de la Roche, who organized groups at Douai (France), Cologne (Germany), and elsewhere. Alan's insistence that the practice had been instituted by the founder of his order is probably the origin of that widespread belief. In 1520, the rosary was given official papal blessing by Pope Leo X. Since the 1960s, with a change in social attitudes towards religion, the saying of a rosary in public has become increasingly rare.

The repetition of large numbers of prayers has been common practice among monks and ascetics since Christianity's earliest years, and various other devices have been used for counting. Alongside the mummy of the fourth-century Christian ascetic, Thais, unearthed at Antinöe in Egypt in the early twentieth century, was found a board with holes in it, which is thought to have been a device for counting prayers. Palladius relates that the fourth-century, Paul the Hermit, set himself the daily task of repeating three hundred prayers, which he counted by means of the same number of pebbles.<sup>1</sup> Multiple repetitions of the Lord's Prayer were not uncommon, and by the thirteenth century at least, an entire string of prayer beads had become known as a *paternoster*. The craftsmen who made the items, who formed a craft guild of some significance, were also known as *paternosters*.<sup>2</sup>

The purpose of the beads or knotted cord is twofold. Firstly, it permits an easy reckoning of how many prayers have been repeated; secondly, it is an aid to concentration, helping to focus the mind upon the accompanying prayer. However, it is best used as a means to an end, to be discarded automatically when the mind is focused on the prayer with deep inner attention. Hence, Bishop Ignatius Brianchaninov writes of the Eastern Orthodox practice of the Jesus prayer:

The rosary is used to count prostrations, and also monks sit and practise the prayer of Jesus at first by the rosary. But when, through prayer, attention increases, it becomes impossible to pray by a rosary and count the prayers. Then the whole attention is absorbed in the prayer.

*Ignatius Brianchaninov, On the Prayer of Jesus 14, OPJ p.106*

Likewise, Walter Hilton advises that the rosary be set aside when a higher form of prayer is awakened:

Any custom is good provided that it tends to foster virtue and prevent sin. Such a custom should never be abandoned, for you must always try to cultivate humility, patience, temperance, purity, and all other virtues. But any custom that prevents the adoption of a better should be abandoned as soon as time and circumstances permit. For instance, if someone is accustomed to recite a certain number of rosaries, or meditate in a certain way for a fixed time, or watch, or kneel for a

set time, or observe any other outward custom, such customs should sometimes be set aside when there is reasonable cause, or if greater grace is given by other means.

*Walter Hilton, Ladder of Perfection 2:21, LPH pp.158–59*

It is necessary for the mind to remain focused in devotion on the prayer. If the fingers move mechanically on the rosary, while prayers are repeated distractingly, there is little benefit. In his *Straight Road to Heaven*, the Spanish priest and mystic Juan Falconi (1596–1638) denigrates such “parrot-like repetitions” and “ill-said rosaries and *Ave Marias*”,<sup>3</sup> before going on to speak of the higher “mental and interior prayer”. Distinguishing between meditation and contemplation, he writes:

This contemplation is more profitable than the saying of rosaries in the usual way, and . . . more so than if one is continually asking for something.

*Juan Falconi, Straight Road to Heaven, OJF2 pp.282–3, in SSM2 p.299*

In general, he regards pure inward contemplation, without any external aids, as superior to all outward props and ceremonies:

The soul is pure spirit of the simplest possible kind; it cannot therefore be satisfied save by acts of pure spirituality, unconnected with the senses; other things cannot give it the sustenance that its nature demands or the food that is adequate to its inclination.

*Juan Falconi, Straight Road to Heaven, OJF2 pp.323–4; cf. in SSM2 p.300*

Much depends on the attitude and approach of the practitioner, for there have been individuals who have opened the door to a deep inner life with the aid of a rosary. There is the well-known case of the seeker in *The Way of a Pilgrim*, whose *staretz* (spiritual guide) bade him – while using a rosary – repeat the Jesus prayer three thousand times a day, neither more nor less; then six thousand times, then twelve thousand times, and then unceasingly. Here, the significance of an exact number is to test the disciple’s obedience. By repeating the prayer, the pilgrim experienced a state of joy, and complete detachment from the world.<sup>4</sup> More usual, however, is the advice of Bishop Theophan the Recluse (1815–1894):

Do not trouble about the number of times you say the Prayer. Let this be your sole concern, that it should spring up in your heart with quickening power like a fountain of Living Water. Expel entirely from your mind all thoughts of quantity.

*Theophan the Recluse, in PJMS p.81, in PNW p.16*

In more recent times, Immaculée Ilibagiza, a Rwandan Tutsi, recalls how in 1994, then a university student, she spent ninety-one days hiding with at first five, and later seven, other ladies huddled in a tiny bathroom, with insufficient space even to lie down. During that time, in the small country of Rwanda, fanatic Hutu gangs murdered an estimated 800,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus. Yet, through prayer, and using her rosary, she found a “special space” of peace within herself:

When I meditated, I touched the source of my faith and strengthened the core of my soul. While horror swirled around me, I found refuge in a world that became more welcoming and wonderful with each visit. Even as my body shrivelled, my soul was nourished through my deepening relationship with God.

I entered my special space through prayer; once inside, I prayed nonstop, using my rosary as an anchor to focus my thoughts and energies on God. The rosary beads helped me concentrate on the gospels, and keep the words of God alive in my mind. I prayed in silence.

*Immaculée Ilibagiza, Left to Tell, LTII p.95*

See also: **tasbīḥ**.

1. Palladius, *Historia Lausiaca* 20, LHP2 p.63.
2. For some of the above information, see “rosary,” *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 2001; “rosary,” *Catholic Encyclopedia*, 1912.
3. Juan Falconi, *Straight Road to Heaven*, OJF2 p.2, in SSM2 p.291.
4. *Way of a Pilgrim*, WPW pp.12–16.

**Rosh Hashanah** (He) *Lit.* head (*rosh*) of the year (*ha-shanah*); New Year in the Jewish calendar, the first day of the month of *Tishrei* (usually September/October); also called *Yom Teru'ah*, the day that the *shofar*, the ram's horn, is blown. *Rosh Hashanah* is the first day of the ten ‘days of awe (*yamim nora'im*)’, which culminate in *Yom Kippur* (Day of Atonement). The ten days of awe are also referred to as ‘high holy days’, a period regarded as the holiest days in the Jewish year. At this time, there is collective self-examination, repentance for sin, and rededication of devotion to God and His commandments.

According to a traditional belief, it was on this day that God created Adam and Eve, the first man and woman, as described in *Genesis*.<sup>1</sup> It is hence considered to be the birthday of the universe. According to tradition, as written in the *Mishnah*,<sup>2</sup> God inscribes each person's judgment for the coming year into one of three books: if a person is righteous, he is inscribed in the Book of Life; if a person has indulged in evil, his destiny is sealed – as the *Mishnah*

says, quoting the *Psalms*, “blotted out of the Book of Life forever”;<sup>3</sup> and if a person has been intermediate in his behaviour, then he has ten days in which to repent for his sins and join those inscribed in the Book of Life. The books are opened on *Rosh Hashanah* and sealed on *Yom Kippur*.

In addition to the liturgy of prayers and biblical readings, some moving hymns known as *piyyutim*, written by medieval poets, are sung during the service. Traditional foods such as apples with honey are also eaten, symbolizing hope for a sweet year to come.

See also: **Book of Life** (7.4), **shofar** (3.2), **Yom Kippur**.

1. *Genesis* 2:4–3:24.
2. *Mishnah, Tractate Rosh Hashanah* 1:2.
3. *Psalms* 69:28.

**rtsod rigs** (T) *Lit.* reasoned (*rigs*) debate (*rtsod*); the art of debate; a Tibetan Buddhist tradition of formalized, ritual debate, with established rules, procedures and techniques, using debate between monks as a kind of intellectual exercise in the form of a dialectic or logical, deductive argument. The higher purpose is to help clear misconceptions and uncertainties in the minds of the participants, and to replace ignorance (regarded as the source of bondage and suffering) with knowledge and understanding of the true nature of Reality, which ultimately leads to liberation from suffering and rebirth (*samsāra*). Such debates usually take place in debating institutions (*rtsod grwa*) such as monastic colleges, where they can take up a significant part of a monastic day.

The Tibetan Buddhist tradition of philosophical debate was imported from India where it was well established as a form of settling disputes between two or more doctrines or factions, with the loser of the debate joining the winner’s side. This could include all the disciples and followers of the defeated becoming followers of the winner. After their conversion to Buddhism (c. C7th CE), Tibetan kings began to send young students and trainees to India to study Buddhism, learn Sanskrit, and develop a written language for Tibet. The art of debate was one of the skills that the Tibetans brought back with them, in which they used the same logical foundation as their Indian neighbours but with some minor modifications.

With the passage of time, the formal debate has been adopted into the curriculum of monastic colleges, especially (but not exclusively) those of the *Geluk* school, which confer the title of *dge bshes* (pron. *geshe*) upon their graduates. *Dge bshes* means ‘virtuous friend’, and is equivalent to ‘doctor of buddhology’. The curriculum can last anywhere between twelve to thirty years with one of its main subjects being logic (T. *tshad ma*), the ability to infer a conclusion and gain knowledge (*pramāṇa*) based on a given premise.

Examinations, which include debates, are conducted every year. In the *Geluk* Tibetan monasteries established in India since the Chinese invasion of Tibet, two-hour debating sessions take place morning and evening.

The debating technique is to analyse doctrinal conceptions by employing dialectical or logical arguments to settle differences of opinion or simply to train student-monks in logical thinking using deductions starting from the obvious and proceeding to the non-obvious. The ultimate intention is to understand something concerning the nature of Reality.

A typical debate begins with the challenger standing and the defender seated. The challenger first invokes Mañjushrī, the celestial *bodhisattva* of wisdom and the adopted patron of debate. He claps his hands and stamps his left foot accompanied by the shout “*Dhiḥ*,” the seed syllable (*bīja-mantra*) of Mañjushrī. The formalized gestures and posturing of the challenger used throughout the debate are given various symbolic meanings. In this instance, though interpretations of the clapping and stamping vary to some extent, the agreed intention is to remind the protagonists that the purpose of the debate is to understand the truth of something as regards its relationship to the higher wisdom. A further, formalized, ritual procedure then ensues:

The practice involves a seated defender (*dam bca’ ba*) and a standing challenger (*rigs lam pa*). The roles are quite different; the defender must assert a thesis and attempt to defend its truth. The challenger, however, asks questions in an attempt to get the defender to accept statements that are contradictory (for example, both ‘all colours are white’ and ‘there is a colour that is red’) or absurd (for example, ‘the colour of a white religious conch shell is red’). The challenger is not held responsible for the truth content of the questions; like someone raising an objection at a lecture, the challenger does not have to assert any thesis, but only aims to show that the defender is mistaken.

*“Tibetan Philosophy,” Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy, IEP<sup>1</sup>*

The challenger begins by asking the defender to present his thesis, which he then questions in order to clarify its meaning, to establish common ground, or to proceed with the debate. A complete question raised by the challenger contains a subject, a predicate, and a reason, such as, “Socratēs (the subject) is mortal (the predicate) because he is a man (the reason).” The question is presented as a statement, the logical truth of which the defender has to decide upon. If the question is incomplete, the defender can request clarification, but on receiving a complete question only three responses are open to him:

1. “I accept (*’dod*),” if the defender thinks that the logic of the statement is correct. In the example given, this would be the correct answer.

2. “The reason is not established (*rtags ma grub*),” if he thinks that the reason does not apply to the subject. This would have been the correct answer if the statement had been, “Socratēs is mortal because he is a cow.”
3. “It does not pervade (*ma khyab*),” if he thinks that the reason does not apply to the predicate. The denial of pervasion is of two kinds – uncertain and certain. If the question had been, “Socratēs is a philosopher because he is a man,” this would have been an instance of an uncertain lack of pervasion, because not all men are philosophers. “Socratēs is a reptile because of being a man” would have been an example of a certain lack of pervasion because men and reptiles are mutually exclusive.

The original Indian style of debate includes only ‘true’ or ‘false’ as acceptable responses. The third answer is a Tibetan innovation which adds a further dimension to the correctness or otherwise of a reply. The debates are held in the open air of the monastery courtyard, and the contenders can bring no books or other aids with them. They have to rely entirely on their own knowledge, wit, and understanding.

In its purest form, the idea is not to defeat the opponent, but to defeat misconceptions and misunderstandings of the *Dharma* (teachings). To that end, monks study very hard in preparation for a debate, ensuring that every word and every concept is fully understood and rehearsed so that explaining their point of view is based on thorough knowledge without any prejudice. If a monk cannot persuade his opponent of his point of view, then he is compelled to accept that of his opponent. But the underlying intention is not about winning or losing, as in sport; it is about arriving at the best understanding to dispel ignorance, which is the source of suffering and rebirth in the world of *samsāra*. It is also understood that while reasoning has its place, it also has its limitations, and the only path to real understanding and enlightenment is the path of direct perception through devotion and meditation.

Part of the intention behind a Tibetan Buddhist debate is to create humility by understanding that the more one learns, the less one knows. In practice, however, the scene of many monks in an enclosed courtyard with limited space, raising their voices and gesticulating wildly, the challenger standing before the seated defender, clapping his hands, stamping his foot and lunging forward, presents a boisterous spectacle that is difficult to reconcile with humility and the peace of meditation. Commentators, however, explain that the postures and gestures are stylized and have a symbolic meaning, as in Eastern dance.

When the challenger presents a statement to the defender, he raises his right arm, palm downwards, with his right hand at the level of the head. At the same time, the left hand is stretched out at a lower level with the palm upwards. As he ends his question, he loudly claps his right hand down upon



the left and stamps his left foot. He then draws back his right hand with the palm upwards and simultaneously puts forward his left hand with the palm downwards.

Although symbolic interpretations of the gestures are not always the same, certain general themes appear in all explanations. The left hand symbolizes the wisdom that will lead the way out of *saṃsāra*, the cycle of transmigration in this world. The right hand represents the *bodhisattva*'s altruistic desire, motivated by love and compassion, to bring enlightenment to all sentient beings. Clapping signifies the joining of the desire for enlightenment with wisdom, the combination by which buddhahood is attained. Putting forward the left hand with the palm downwards after clapping represents closing the door against rebirth in *saṃsāra*. Pulling back and raising the right hand with the palm upwards after clapping signifies the intention to raise all sentient beings out of *saṃsāra*, bringing them to enlightenment.<sup>2</sup> Elsewhere, it is said that stamping with the left foot symbolizes the power of wisdom which crushes the ignorance and delusion of sentient beings.

The best-known debate in the history of Tibetan Buddhism was the Great Debate of the Council of Lhasa, which was actually a series of debates spanning two years (792–794). The debates took place in the city of Samye at the Samye Monastery, situated some distance from Lhasa, the capital city of Tibet. The instigator of the debates was King Trisong Detsen of Tibet who, at the time, was entertaining suspicions that the *Chán* monk he had invited from China to settle at Samye Monastery was not teaching the true *Dharma*. The debate took place between the Indian monk Kamalashīla and his opponent the Chinese *Chán* master Héshang Móhēyǎn. The subject of the debate was whether enlightenment (*bodhi*) is a spontaneous experience that suddenly happens to a meditator, in which all impurities and defilements are burned and destroyed and enlightenment is attained, or whether it is the result of a long and gradual process of spiritual transformation accomplished by following the noble path and by living the *Dharma*. Kamalashīla defended the gradual process while Héshang defended the sudden viewpoint. According to Tibetan historians, Kamalashīla won the debate, Héshang Móhēyǎn was ordered to leave the country, and all texts pertaining to the sudden-enlightenment path were destroyed by royal decree. This event had a profound influence on Tibetan Buddhism, which continued to follow the Indian gradualist path, with diminishing influence from China.

Debate was an innovation introduced in Tibetan Buddhism long after the death of the Buddha. The tradition, however, does gain some support from a passage in the Pali *suttas* in which the Buddha teaches that something should not be accepted even if a respected teacher has said it, even the Buddha himself. Before accepting a teaching, the Buddha advises, every individual should consider it and make up his own mind regarding its veracity or the



reverse. According to the *Kālāmā Sutta* of the *Anguttara Nikāya*, when the Buddha arrives at the city of the *Kālāmas*, they complain to him that they have heard so many doctrines that they are confused as to what they should believe. But the Buddha does not see this as a problem. Instead, he counsels them:

It is fitting for you to be perplexed, *Kālāmas*, fitting for you to be uncertain; uncertainty has arisen in you about a perplexing matter. Come, *Kālāmas*, do not go by oral tradition, by teaching lineage, by hearsay, by what is in the scriptures, by logical reasoning, by axiom, by reasoned cogitation, by the acceptance of a view after pondering over it, by someone's seeming authority, or because you think, "This contemplative (*samaṇa*) is our *guru* (Pa. *garu*)."

But *Kālāmas*, it is only when you know for yourselves that, "these things are unwholesome; these things are blameworthy; these things are censured by the wise; these things, if accepted and undertaken, lead to harm and suffering" – that you should abandon them. . . . (Or conversely,) it is only when you know for yourselves that, "these things are wholesome; these things are blameless; these things are praised by the wise; these things, if accepted and undertaken, lead to welfare and happiness" – that you should live in accordance with them.

*Anguttara Nikāya* 3:65, *Kālāmā Sutta*, PTSA1 pp.189–90;

cf. NDBB pp.280–81, ANST

Other texts, however, suggest that the Buddha himself did not encourage contentious, intellectual disputes, because they have no positive outcome. According to the *Hāliddakāni Sutta* of the *Samyutta Nikāya*, a certain monk is asked why the Buddha had said that he did not "engage with people in quarrelsome dispute". The monk describes the kind of contentious dispute in which the Buddha would not participate:

And how does one engage with people in quarrelsome debate (*kathā viggayha*)? There is the kind of person, for instance, who engages in this kind of dispute: "You don't understand this doctrine and discipline; I'm the one who understands this doctrine and discipline; how could you understand this doctrine and discipline? You're practising wrongly; I'm practising rightly; what should have been said first, you said last; what should have been said last, you said first; I'm being consistent; you're inconsistent; what you took so long to think out has been refuted; your doctrine has been overthrown; you're defeated; go and try to salvage your doctrine, or extricate yourself if you can!" This is how people engage in quarrelsome debate.

*Samyutta Nikāya* 22:3, *Hāliddakāni Sutta*, PTSS3 p.12; cf. CDBB p.862, SNTB

In the *Sutta Nipāta*, the Buddha describes the disturbed state of mind of those who like to indulge in such disputation:

“Only here is there purity” – that’s what they maintain. “No other doctrines are pure” – that is what they say. They insist that what they have devoted themselves to is good; they are deeply entrenched in their personal beliefs. Seeking controversy, they plunge into an assembly, mutually branding each other as fools. They go to others and pick a quarrel. Desiring praise, they claim to be experts. Engaged in disputes in the midst of the assembly – anxious, desiring praise – the defeated one is smitten by chagrin. Shaken by criticism, he gets angry and seeks a way out. He whose thesis is deemed to have been demolished and defeated by those judging the issue – he laments, he grieves at being the inferior exponent. “He beat me,” he mourns. Disputes (*vivādā*) such as these have arisen among contemplatives (*samaṇas*). In these sort of disputes, there are punches and counterpunches.

Seeing this, one should abstain from disputes, for they have no other goal than to gain kudos. He who is praised there for expounding his doctrine in the midst of the assembly, will laugh on that account and grow haughty, having won the case as he had desired. But that haughtiness will be the making of his downfall, for he speaks in pride and conceit.

Seeing this, one should abstain from dispute, for the wise say that no purity is attained like that.

*Sutta Nipāta* 4:8, *Pasura Sutta*, *PTSN* pp.161–62; cf. *SNV* pp.157–58, *KNTB*

See also: **dge ba’i bshes gnyen** (7.1).

1. Ret. December 2015.
2. See Daniel Perdue, *Debate in Tibetan Buddhism*, *DTBP* pp.29–30.

**ruqyah** (A/P) (pl. *ruqā*) *Lit.* incantation, charm; magic incantations used in the Middle East to ward off evil and misfortune. Such formulae, some comprised only of sounds rather than recognizable words, have existed in many cultures, East and West. Most *ruqā* used in the Muslim world today are derived from the *Qur’ān*.

There are a number of traditional stories (*ḥadīth*) concerning Muḥammad indicating the prevalence of the custom in his time, and the uncertainty among his followers as to whether or not the practice was acceptable. The stories generally involve the healing of someone who has been poisoned, bitten by a snake, stung by a scorpion, affected by an ‘evil eye’, or is suffering from conditions such as ear ailments, and so on.<sup>1</sup>

In all such instances, the Prophet sees no problem with the practice, including making a charge for the service, even when the *ruqyah* is taken from the *Qur'ān*. Some of the *ḥadīth* imply that a special dispensation to practice *ruqyah* was given by the Prophet to particular individuals. According to Abū Sa'īd:

Once, when some of the Companions of the Prophet were travelling, they came upon some Arab tribesmen (at nightfall). The Companions asked the tribesmen to treat them as their guests, but the Companions were refused. Subsequently, the chief of the tribesmen was bitten by a snake (or stung by a scorpion). They tried their best to cure him, but in vain. Some of the tribesmen said (to the others), "Nothing has helped him, will you go to the people who are staying here tonight, in case some of them have something that will help."

So they went to the Companions and said, "Our chief has been bitten by a snake (or stung by a scorpion). We have tried everything, but nothing has helped him. Do you have anything that will help?"

One of them replied, "Yes, by *Allāh*! I can recite a *ruqyah*, but since you refused to accept us as your guests, I will not recite the *ruqyah* for you unless you pay us something for doing so." So the tribesmen agreed to pay the Companions a flock of sheep. One of the Companions then went to the chief and recited (*Sūrat al-Fātiḥah*): "All the praises are for the Lord of the worlds," and blew upon him. At this, the chief suddenly recovered, as if he had been released from chains; and he got up and started walking about, showing no signs of sickness.

When the tribesmen had paid what had been agreed, some of the Companions suggested that they should divide their earnings among themselves. But the one who had performed the recitation said, "We should make no such division until we have been to the Prophet and told him the whole story, and received his instructions." So, they went to *Allāh*'s Messenger and told him what had happened.

*Allāh*'s Apostle then asked, "How did you come to know that *Sūrat al-Fātiḥah* could be recited as a *ruqyah*?" Then he added, "You have done the right thing. Divide your earnings, and assign a share to me as well" – at which, the Prophet smiled.

*Ḥadīth Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* 3:36.476; cf. HSB

And:

Umm Salamah narrated that the Prophet saw in her house a girl whose face had a black spot. He said, "She is under the effect of an evil eye; so treat her with a *ruqyah*."

*Ḥadīth Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* 7:71.635, HSB

Other *ḥadīth*, however, relate how the Prophet is told by the angel Gabriel that seventy thousand of his followers have been allowed entry to paradise without any reckoning of their accounts or receiving any punishment, solely because they had avoided treating themselves by means of cauterization or *ruqyah*.<sup>2</sup>

1. E.g. *Ḥadīth Mālik Muwaṭṭa'* 50:4.11, *HM*; *Ḥadīth Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* 7:71.606, 617, 632–48, *HSB*; *Ḥadīth Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* 26:5432–62, *HSM*.
2. E.g. *Ḥadīth Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* 8:76.479, 549, *HSB*.

**rusūm** (A/P) (sg. *rasm*) *Lit.* traces, appearances, forms, externals; hence also, formalities, conventions, ceremonial actions.

Using the Muslim description of the divine creative process by which the divine Attributes give rise to His Acts, which in turn lead to His Effects, al-Qāshānī says that “everything other than God Himself” is a form (*rasm*):

Form (*rasm*) represents God’s creation and Attributes (*Ṣifāt*), for forms (*rusūm*) are God’s Effects (*al-Āthār*), as is everything other than God Himself, the Effects stemming from the Acts (*Afāl*).

*Al-Qāshānī, Iṣṭilāḥāt al-Ṣūfīyah* 459, *GSTA* p.148; cf. *GST* p.101, in *SSE13* p.85

From a human viewpoint, Hujwārī defines *rusūm* as “ceremonial actions proceeding from certain motives; actions devoid of reality, so that their external form (*ẓāhir*) is at variance with their spirit”. He contrasts *rusūm* with *akhlāq* (morals, principles, character traits), which he says entail “actions without ceremony or motive, actions devoid of pretension, so that their external form (*ẓāhir*) is in harmony with their spirit”. He quotes Abū al-Ḥasan Nūrī, who says, “Sufism is not composed of *ẓāhir* (external forms and practices) and *‘ulūm* (sciences, knowledge), but it is *akhlāq*.”<sup>1</sup> Hujwārī also relates:

Ibn al-Jallā says: “Sufism is an essence without form (*rasm*),” because the form (*rasm*) belongs to mankind in respect to their conduct, while the essence thereof is peculiar to God. Since Sufism consists in turning away from mankind, it is necessarily without form (*rasm*).

*Hujwārī, Kashf al-Maḥjūb* III, *KMM* p.43, *KM* pp.37–38

Ibn al-‘Arabī speaks of *‘ilm al-rusūm* or *‘ilm al-rasmī* (knowledge of forms, knowledge of outward descriptions), by which he means external or exoteric knowledge such as the various sciences, and especially the *sharī‘ah* (Islamic religious law) and all its many ramifications.<sup>2</sup> He also speaks of *ahl al-rusūm* (people of forms)<sup>3</sup> and *‘ulamā’ al-rusūm* (knowers of forms), meaning exoteric scholars or scholars of external knowledge, of whom he writes, “God created no one more onerous and troublesome for the folk of *Allāh* (the mystics) than

the exoteric scholars (*‘ulamā’ al-rusūm*).<sup>4</sup> Generally, he speaks pejoratively of the *ahl al-rusūm* and the *‘ulamā’ al-rusūm*,<sup>5</sup> though he does concede that outer knowledge has a validity within its own sphere of reference. For the most part, he contrasts the *‘ulamā’ al-rusūm* with the *ahl Allāh* (people of *Allāh*, folk of *Allāh*) or the *‘arīfūn* (mystics, gnostics).

Shaykh Bahā’ī similarly writes of the superiority of love and mystic experience over external knowledge:

Abandon external knowledge (*‘ilm-i rasmī*),  
for it is all talk, all chatter;  
Give me the lesson of love, O heart,  
for it is all ecstasy (*wajd*) and experience (*ḥāl*)!  
*Shaykh Bahā’ī, Kullīyāt 974, KSBA p.65; cf. in SSE9 p.127*

See also: *‘ālim al-rusūm* (7.1).

1. Hujwīrī, *Kashf al-Maḥjūb* III, KMM p.47; cf. KM p.42.
2. E.g. Ibn al-‘Arabī, *Meccan Revelations* 2:233.34, 350.23, 3:333.20, FMIA3 (2:146, 178) pp.352, 525, FMIA6 (4:366) p.59, SPK pp.256–57, 44, 161.
3. E.g. Ibn al-‘Arabī, *Meccan Revelations* 2:581.4, FMIA4 (4:272) p.315, SPK pp.244–45.
4. Ibn al-‘Arabī, *Meccan Revelations* 1:279.7, FMIA1 (1:50, 54) pp.411, 421, SPK p.247; see also 1:272.17, SPK p.72.
5. E.g. Ibn al-‘Arabī, *Meccan Revelations* 3:167.8, FMIA5 (4:342) p.247, SPK p.388 (n.22).

**rūzah** (P) *Lit.* abstention, fasting. See **ṣawm**.

**Sabbath** (He. *Shabbat*) From *shavat* (cease, desist, rest); in Jewish tradition, the seventh day of the week, beginning at sundown on Friday and lasting until sundown on Saturday; regarded by Jews as a sacred day, recalling the day of rest taken by God after creating the world in six days, according to the *Genesis* creation story;<sup>1</sup> a day devoted to worship and rest in Judaism and some branches of Christianity; in Christianity, the Sabbath has generally come to mean Sunday, although some post-Reformation groups, such as Seventh-day Adventists, observe Saturday as the Sabbath. The division of a day, from evening to evening, follows the *Genesis* story, “And the evening and the morning were the first day.”<sup>2</sup>

The commandment to “remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy” by refraining from all work is found in *Exodus*,<sup>3</sup> and is repeated in a number of other biblical texts:<sup>4</sup>

Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy. For six days you shall labour and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath for *Yahweh* your God. You shall do no work that day, neither you nor your son nor your daughter nor your servants, men or women, nor your animals nor the stranger who lives with you. For in six days, *Yahweh* made the heavens and the earth and the sea and all that these hold, but on the seventh day He rested; that is why *Yahweh* has blessed the Sabbath day and made it sacred. . . .

The man who profanes it must be put to death; whoever does any work on that day shall be outlawed from his people. Work is to be done for six days, but the seventh day must be a day of complete rest, consecrated to *Yahweh*. Whoever does any work on the Sabbath day must be put to death. The sons of Israel are to keep the Sabbath, observing it from generation to generation: this is a lasting covenant. Between myself and the sons of Israel the Sabbath is a sign forever. . . . You must not light a fire on the Sabbath day in any of your homes.

*Exodus 20:8–11, 31:14–17, 35:3, JB*

Even the preparation of food was forbidden, a prohibition recalling the forty years spent wandering in the wilderness, when *Yahweh* miraculously provided a double portion of *manna* on Fridays.<sup>5</sup> Food for the Sabbath is prepared beforehand.

Although from time to time various prophets found it necessary to remind the Israelites of their Sabbath obligations,<sup>6</sup> the sacredness of the Sabbath has been a powerful force uniting Jews throughout their long history. In the second century BCE, during the Maccabean wars, observance of the Sabbath had become so strict that the Jews allowed themselves to be slaughtered rather than fight. Realizing that this could result in their annihilation, they decided that in future, they would fight if attacked on the Sabbath.<sup>7</sup> The decision was sanctioned by the *Talmud*, which also decreed that there were thirty-nine categories of work or activity, relating to life and health, that could be carried out on the Sabbath.

Throughout the ages, Jewish tradition has invested the Sabbath with a number of metaphorical interpretations. According to some passages attributed to the Hellenised Jewish philosopher Aristobulus (C3rd or C2nd BCE, although the authorship has been questioned by recent scholarship), the Sabbath symbolized Wisdom (Gk. *Sophia*, He. *Hokhmah*), which is the divine *Logos* or Word. A few extracts from these writings are preserved by the fourth-century Christian theologian Eusebius in his *Praeparatio Evangelica* ('Preparation for the Gospel'):

God created the world and, because life is troublesome for all, He gave us for rest the seventh day, which in reality (*physikōs*) could

also be called the primal Source of light, through which all things are comprehended (*syntheōreitai*, ‘are simultaneously contemplated together’). The latter could also metaphorically be transferred to Wisdom (*Sophia*), for all light comes from her, just as some members of the Peripatetic school say that Wisdom has the role of a beacon fire, because those who follow her unremittingly will remain unruffled their whole life through. But one of our forefathers, Solomon, said more clearly and more beautifully that Wisdom existed before heaven and earth.<sup>8</sup>

*Aristobulus, in Eusebius, Praeparatio Evangelica 13:12, in JSI p.206*

Other philosophers of the Hellenistic period also identified the number seven with Wisdom and light. So – considered metaphorically – divine Wisdom, the Word, the creative power, which is identified with the primordial Light and is symbolized by the number seven, gives the true Sabbath rest to those who follow her.

It is a traditional Jewish belief that on the Sabbath a person receives an additional soul or spirit that departs at the close of the Sabbath. Beginning with the sixteenth-century kabbalists, specifically Rabbi Isaac Luria and his disciples, the Sabbath was personified as the bride of God, the *Shekhinah* (the indwelling divine presence). The Sabbath was called the Sabbath Queen, and the Sabbath evening prayers became understood as a mystical wedding ceremony enacted by the soul and God, the bride and bridegroom, the people of Israel and God. The kabbalists would welcome the Sabbath as a queen entering the home, and intimate relations between husband and wife became part of the ‘mystical wedding ceremony’.

Imagery for the Sabbath hymns was often taken from the biblical *Song of Songs*. The popular Sabbath hymn *Lekha Dodi*, composed in the sixteenth century, is a good example of this allegorical, mystical interpretation of the Sabbath. It encodes a ritualized attempt to unite the masculine and feminine aspects of the Divine. Here, the beloved is *Tiferet*, the masculine *sefirah* (emanation of a divine quality or attribute), which represents the name of God (*Yahweh*); the bride is the *Shekhinah* or the *sefirah* of *Malkut* (Kingship). The hymn begins by welcoming the Sabbath, the *Shekhinah*, the personified presence of the Divine, into the home:

Come, my beloved to meet the bride:  
let us welcome the *Shabbat* into our midst.<sup>9</sup>

*Rabbi Shlomo Halevi Alkabez, Lekha Dodi*

The attempt to enact symbolically the union of what the kabbalists called the masculine and feminine aspects of the Divine represents the attempt to transcend the duality of the positive and negative energies embodied in the

imagery of the *sefirot* (emanation). God is the unity that transcends all duality, and the kabbalists viewed the Sabbath as a metaphor for the higher level of spirit, in which duality is harmonized and transcended. Thus the soul's marriage to God symbolizes the soul's return to Him.

Devout Jews treasure the Sabbath, as it brings the peace of the Divine into mundane life, and at least temporarily detaches a person's attention from the hustle and bustle of everyday existence. It is a hint that there is a spiritual core, the soul, the *Shekhinah*, waiting to express itself from within. At the closing of the Sabbath, a candle is lit and then extinguished, to symbolize the departure of the additional Sabbath spirit. Spices such as cloves or cardamom are inhaled to strengthen the consciousness in compensation for its departure.

Correct observance of the Sabbath is traditionally accompanied by various ceremonies. Before sunset on Friday evening, the woman of the house lights candles and pronounces a blessing. The evening meal is also preceded by a blessing (*kiddush*), a shortened form of which is repeated the next morning, before breakfast, which follows worship in the synagogue. The day ends with a special blessing (*havdalah*), which demarcates the Sabbath from the other days, symbolizing the distinction between the sacred and the mundane, between light and darkness. In modern times, orthodox and conservative Jews still endeavour to observe the Sabbath in the traditionally sacred manner, though some permit leeway in matters such as travel.

In the time of Jesus, it is clear from the gospel stories that the Sabbath was still a matter of strict observance. According to a story told in *Mark*, in response to criticism of Jesus' disciples for plucking heads of grain on the Sabbath, Jesus observes:

The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath:  
so the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath.

*Mark 2:27–28, RSV*

And when Jesus himself is about to heal a man with a paralysed hand, he circumvents the criticism of the Pharisees who are looking on by asking:

Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath days, or to do evil? To save life,  
or to kill?

*Mark 3:4, KJV*

Likewise in a similar story in *Luke*, Jesus asks:

Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fallen into a pit, and will not  
straightway pull him out on the Sabbath day?<sup>10</sup>

*Luke 14:5, KJV*



Jesus is making the point that the Sabbath is a human institution, and it makes no sense to make oneself a victim of an otherwise good practice. There has to be some leeway for dealing with the vagaries of life.

Since the mind works by habit, to maintain a sense of the sacred for just one day, while being absorbed in material affairs for the rest of the week, is by no means easy. Since God is always present within, not only on the Sabbath, mystics generally advise constant remembrance of the Divine. This is brought out in a saying attributed to Jesus in the *Gospel of Thomas* that has been variously translated. Jesus says:

Unless you fast from the world,  
you will not find the kingdom.  
And unless you keep the Sabbath as a real sabbath,  
you will not see the Father.

*Gospel of Thomas 38:27; cf. NHS20 pp.64–65, NSJ p.35, OLAG p.5, SOL p.19*

Or as another rendering has it, “Unless you keep the Sabbath for the whole week, . . .”.<sup>11</sup> Jesus means that unless a person maintains a sense of the sacred and divine presence at all times, living a holy and spiritual life, not just on the Sabbath, he will not be able to see God. Raising the same point, there is an interesting addition to *Luke’s* gospel, found in the fifth-century biblical manuscript, the *Codex Bezae*:

On the same day, seeing someone working on the Sabbath,  
he said to him:  
“Man, if indeed you know what you are doing,  
you are blessed:  
But if you know not, you are cursed,  
and a transgressor of the Law.”

*Luke 6:4, Codex Bezae; cf. ANT p.33*

He means, it would seem, that if people understand the real nature of the Sabbath, such that they keep it at all times, every day, then even if they break the Sabbath by working, they are blessed, for their mind is always on God, whether at work or not. But if out of wilfulness they break the Sabbath, then they are “cursed” for they have no sense of the Divine and of the sacredness of life. They are “cursed” in the sense that the mind is always in a state of worry, tension, and pain. They are not only a “transgressor” of the Jewish Law, but also of the higher Law or Word by which man returns to God.

Interestingly, later Christians imbued the notion of the Sabbath with a higher meaning. The real Sabbath, they maintained, was eternal rest with God. As St Augustine prays:

O Lord God, grant us peace,  
 for all that we have is Your gift.  
 Grant us the peace of rest,  
 the peace of the Sabbath, which has no evening.

For this worldly order in all its beauty shall pass away.  
 All these things, though very good, will pass away  
 when they have run their course.  
 They have been allotted a morning and an evening...

In that eternal Sabbath, You will rest in us,  
 as now You work in us.  
 The rest that we shall enjoy will be Yours,  
 as the work that we do now is Your work done through us.

*St Augustine, Confessions 13:35, 37; cf. CA p.346, CSA pp.347–48*

Luis de Granada writes of how the experience of divine sweetness and nobility leads to an increasing joy that culminates in the soul's rest or "spiritual Sabbath" in God:

From this is born a marvellous delight; thence a most ardent desire for God; from this desire a fresh satiety; from the satiety an inebriation; and thence a security and a perfect repose in God, wherein our soul rests and has its spiritual Sabbath.

*Luis de Granada, Memorial de la Vida Cristiana 7:1,  
 OFLG3 p.539, in SSM1 pp.45–46*

Or as Isaiah the Solitary writes, when the soul is free, it finds eternal Sabbath rest:

If your soul (*nous*) is freed, the gulf between it and God is eliminated.  
 If your soul (*nous*) is freed from all its enemies and attains the Sabbath rest, it lives in another age, a new age in which it contemplates things new and undecaying.

*Isaiah the Solitary, On Guarding the Spirit 9–10, Philokalia; cf. PCT1 pp.23–24*

Maximos the Confessor writes that "the Sabbath rest of God signifies the complete reversion of created beings to God."<sup>12</sup> He also understands the Sabbath to signify a change of inner direction:

The Sabbath signifies rest from the passions, and from the gravitation of the soul (*nous*) towards the nature of created beings. It signifies the total quiescence of the passions, a complete cessation of the

gravitation of the soul (*nous*) towards created things, and its total entry into the Divine.

*Maximos the Confessor, On Theology 5:43, Philokalia; cf. PCT2 p.271*

The English poet, Alfred Lord Tennyson, also writes with evident yearning of the soul's desire for eternal rest:

Break up the heavens, O Lord! and far,  
Thro' all yon starlight keen,  
Draw me, Thy Bride, a glittering star,  
In raiment white and clean.

He lifts me to the golden doors;  
The flashes come and go;  
All heaven bursts her starry floors,  
And strows her lights below,  
And deepens on and up! the gates  
Roll back, and far within  
For me the Heavenly Bridegroom waits,  
To make me pure of sin.  
The Sabbaths of eternity,  
One Sabbath deep and wide –  
A light upon the shining sea –  
The Bridegroom with his Bride!

*Alfred Lord Tennyson, St Agnes' Eve*

See also: **rituals and ceremonies, Shekhinah** (8.1).

1. *Genesis* 2:2–3.
2. *Genesis* 1:5, *KJV*.
3. See also *Exodus* 16:25–30, 35:2–3.
4. *Leviticus* 19:3, 30, 23:3, 31–32, 26:2; *Numbers* 15:32–36, 28:9–10; *1 Chronicles* 23:31; *2 Chronicles* 2:4, 8:13, 23:4.
5. *Exodus* 16:22–27.
6. *Ezekiel* 20:12–24, 22:8, 22:26, 23:38, 44:24, 45:17, 46:1ff.; *Isaiah* 58:13; *Jeremiah* 17:21–27; *Nehemiah* 13:15–22.
7. *1 Maccabees* 2:31–41.
8. *Proverbs* 8:22–30.
9. *Cf. Song of Songs* 7:11–12.
10. *Cf. Luke* 13:15.
11. *Cf. ANT* p.27.
12. Maximos the Confessor, *On Theology* 1:47, *Philokalia*, *PCT2* p.123.

**sackcloth and ashes** Dressing in sackcloth (especially as a garment worn around the waist) and pouring ashes over one's head and body; a symbol of repentance, grief, and mourning; a traditional and public display of repentance, remorse, and heartfelt grief over one's sins; also a display of grief and mourning over the loss of a loved one, *etc.*; a custom originating in Judaism but carried forward into Christianity; a penance for past sins; part of a programme of self-mortification aimed at quelling unruly desires and the demands of the body; mentioned at many places in the Bible and associated literature.<sup>1</sup>

The biblical psalmist, for example, praises God for lifting him out of the depths of despair, symbolized by "sackcloth", which in this instance may also be a metaphorical reference to the body:

You have turned my mourning into dancing;  
 You have stripped off my sackcloth,  
     and clothed me with joy;  
 Now my heart will sing to You unceasingly;  
*Yahweh*, my God, I shall praise You forever.

*Psalms 30:11–12, NJB*

See also: **fasting, penance.**

1. *E.g. Daniel 9:3; Esther 4:1–4; Isaiah 58:5; Joel 1:8, 13; Jonah 3:5–7; Matthew 11:21; Book of Revelation 11:3; etc.*

**sacrament** (L. *sacramentum*) Something possessing a sacred significance; theurgy, the mysteries, beneficent religious magic; the ceremonies believed to invoke the grace and blessings of the Divine that are common to all religions; in Christianity, an outward religious ceremony or action, accompanied by a prescribed form of words, believed to have been instituted by Christ, and regarded as conferring some particular spiritual grace or power upon the recipients; an outward ritual symbolizing the bestowal of inner, spiritual grace; in the Catholic and Orthodox Churches and some Protestant denominations such as the Anglican Church: baptism, confirmation, the Eucharist, confession (also called penance), ordination, matrimony, and anointing of the sick (formerly, extreme unction); in some other Protestant denominations: only baptism and the Eucharist; also, the actual consecrated elements of the Eucharist, especially the bread.

In Roman times, a *sacramentum* was a legally binding oath in which a man surrendered his life or property to the deities believed to uphold justice and oversee solemn contracts. Later, it was used for an oath of allegiance made

by soldiers to their commanding officer when setting out on a new campaign, using a formula with a religious connotation.<sup>1</sup>

According to Christian belief, since God, the soul and grace are all of a spiritual nature, God can and does confer grace upon human beings without any external sign or ceremony. Nevertheless, it is believed that since God has instituted various ceremonies for the transmission of particular forms of grace, it is necessary to make use of those ceremonies in order to obtain that grace. That is to say that although God is not bound to the use of ceremonies in order to bestow grace, He has nonetheless been pleased to do so, regarding it as the best way of dealing with creatures who are both spiritual and corporeal. Three things are thus considered necessary for every sacrament: the outer sign or ceremony, the inner grace, and divine institution.

Theologians have presented various reasons why this should be. Firstly, they observe that since the entire world is essentially sacramental, all things are signs of the Divine. It is the nature of creation. As it says in one of the *Psalms*:

The heavens declare the glory of God,  
and the firmament shows forth His handiwork.

*Psalms 19:1; cf. KJV*

They also maintain that man's redemption has always been accomplished by external means. God's message was first given by the biblical prophets and patriarchs, and later by Christ, who established the Church as a visible organization. Finally, they maintain that since human beings are corporeal, it is fitting that they should receive divine grace through the medium of material signs. In general, Protestants believe that the outer ceremony is not the cause of divine grace, while Catholics believe that of themselves the sacraments confer grace.

As proof of these theological arguments, Christians cite the tradition of the early fathers who followed these practices. They also quote New Testament passages such as:<sup>2</sup>

Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

*John 3:5, KJV*

and:

Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood, has eternal life. . . . For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.

*John 6:54–55; cf. KJV*

From a universal mystical perspective, such sayings are regarded as metaphorical, and are not to be taken literally. Moreover, mystics who are not constrained by particular religious doctrines say that divine grace is forever flowing in abundance. A human being only needs to turn his attention within to be the recipient. God is always present within every soul. He does not require humanly created ceremonies in order to do His work. It is by His grace and power that the universe is maintained in existence. If the flow of grace was dependent upon human initiative, the universe would have ended long ago.

This does not mean, of course, that a ceremony such as the Eucharist (also called, the Sacrament), when believed deeply to be God's ordained means of bestowing grace, cannot create a conducive atmosphere. It can certainly help a person of devout and humble mind, emptied of the world, to focus on God, creating an enhanced awareness of His grace and presence. Approached in the right frame of mind, it can be an uplifting, inspiring and revitalizing experience, as many mystically oriented Christians have experienced. Christian mystics have had some of their most profound experiences during or after holy communion:

The person who wants to receive Christ here worthily should as far as possible become like him. As his humility is pure, so must the person who receives him externally be pure from all temporal things; and as God is pure, so must the spirit be emptied of all that is not purely god-like. In this way, the Sacrament may be worthily received. As Christ says: "He who does not leave all, is not worthy of me."<sup>3</sup>

*Book of the Poor in Spirit 4:3.4, BPSG p.220*

But while fully accepting the beliefs of Christianity, many Christians have also become aware that every moment contains the grace of God. To live in the divine will and presence, Jean-Pierre de Caussade calls the "sacrament of the present moment":

It is God alone who gives life to all things, who quickens the soul in the creature and the creature in the soul. God's Word is that life. With it, the heart and the creature are one. Without it, they are strangers. Without the virtue of the divine will, all creation is reduced to nothing. With it, it is brought into the realm of His kingdom where every moment is complete contentment in God alone, and a total surrender of all creatures to His order. It is the sacrament of the present moment.

*J.-P. de Caussade, Sacrament of the Present Moment 8, SPM p.70*

The Abbé de Tourville likewise says that every moment can become a "perpetual communion", long after the sacrament has ended:

Our saviour is not bound to any particular means of grace and does not necessarily need the channel of communion to give our souls the nourishment he desires to give them. God gives Himself generously by interior grace. . . . It even happens that the soul with less emphasis on external things develops the excellent habit of dwelling with greater vividness and reality on the constant indwelling of God within her. That is a perpetual communion, a communion which continues even when the sacramental one ceases. It is the joy of joys. It is that which God wishes you to enjoy.

*Abbé de Tourville, Letters of Direction 16, LDT pp.85–86*

See also: **baptism** (7.4), **Eucharist**.

1. See “sacrament,” *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 2001.
2. See also *Titus* 3:5; *Acts* 8:17, etc.
3. *Matthew* 10:37–38.

**sacred places (Daoism)** See **shèngdì**.

**sacrifice** (Gk. *thysia*, He. *korban*, ‘olah, zevah, L. *sacrificium*) In a religious context, the offering of something regarded as valuable, such as animals, or cereals and other foodstuffs, as a means of gaining something regarded as more desirable or worthy, or of averting some evil or misfortune; the ritual slaughter of a person or animal with the intention of pleasing or propitiating a deity or supernatural entity; a religious rite in which something is offered to a deity in order to restore, maintain or establish a desired relationship with that deity or with the sacred order; a propitiatory offering itself; often performed before starting some enterprise, or upon its completion; in Christianity, the life of Jesus, culminating in his suffering on the cross.

Sacrifice is a complex aspect of human religious behaviour, present in a number of religious traditions, dating back to the earliest known forms of worship. The practice has been much analysed by anthropologists, who have put forward a wide spectrum of theories regarding its underlying origins and motivations.

The sacrifice of animals has always been absent from mainstream Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, Daoism and Christianity, but remains a part of some Hindu and Muslim rituals. Greek and Roman religion also included sacrifice of animals to the gods, although many of the intelligentsia were sceptical of the efficacy of such practices. Clement of Alexandria quotes a number of Greek poets who ridicule the custom. Pherecratēs writes in the

name of the gods, complaining that men take all the succulent and tasty portions of the sacrifice for themselves, leaving only the bones for the gods, as if they were no more than dogs. Menander says that only bile, bones, tail, and genitals are left for the gods.<sup>1</sup> Clement also adds, "I believe sacrifices were invented by men to be a pretext for eating flesh."<sup>2</sup>

In Christianity, it is believed that Christ, as the incarnate Word or *Logos*, sacrificed himself on the cross in payment for the sins of the world. In Catholicism, it is further believed that the Eucharist is a bloodless repetition of this sacrifice. In ancient Judaism, animal sacrifices and offerings of wine and grain were a part of the cultic worship of God by the early Israelites in the mobile sanctuary or tabernacle during their wanderings in the desert, subsequently at the several shrines in Canaan after they had settled there, and later in the Temple in Jerusalem. The sacrifice of animals as burnt offerings on an altar, as a "sweet savour for the Lord", was once an accepted part of the religion, often mentioned in the Hebrew Bible.<sup>3</sup> Noah offers burnt offerings after his deliverance from the flood;<sup>4</sup> as a test, God asks Abraham to make a burnt offering of his son, although, as Abraham is about to comply, God stays his hand and provides him with a ram instead.<sup>5</sup> The sacrifice of animals as burnt offerings is also enshrined in the law given to Moses,<sup>6</sup> though the sacrifice of burnt offerings was also practised by the children of Israel in Egypt before they left Egypt.<sup>7</sup> According to a small sample of such passages:

And the Lord called to Moses, and spoke to him out of the tent of meeting (*i.e.* tabernacle), saying, "Speak to the people of Israel, and say to them, 'If any man of you bring an offering (*korban*) to the Lord, you shall bring your offering (*korban*) of an animal either from the herd or flock.'"

*Leviticus 1:1–2; cf. KB, JB*

And when any will offer a meal offering (*korban*) to the Lord, his offering (*korban*) shall be of fine flour.

*Leviticus 2:1, KB*

The man that is clean, and is not on a journey, and fails to keep the Passover, then that person shall be cut off from among his people: because he brought not the offering (*korban*) of the Lord in its appointed season; that man shall bear his sin.

*Numbers 9:13, KB*

The biblical prophets, however, do not always appear to support the practice. Not only do they condemn pagan practices such as the initiation of children



by fire to the deity *Molech*, and even their sacrifice,<sup>8</sup> they also say that the sacrificial offering of animals is not pleasing to God. What is asked for is a godly way of life. In fact, Jeremiah seems to directly contradict the instructions given to Moses in *Exodus*:

When I brought your ancestors out of the land of Egypt,  
 I said nothing to them, gave them no orders,  
 about burnt offerings (*'olah*) and sacrifice (*zevah*).  
 These were My orders: listen to My voice,  
 then I will be your God and you shall be my people.  
 Follow right to the end the way that I mark out for you,  
 and you will prosper.

*Jeremiah 7:22; cf. JB*

Or as Isaiah writes more extensively:

“What are your endless sacrifices (*zevah*) to Me?”, says *Yahweh*.  
 “I am sick of burnt offerings (*'olah*) of rams and the fat of calves.  
 The blood of bulls, and of lambs, and of goats revolts Me. . . .  
 Bring Me your worthless offerings no more,  
 the smoke of them fills Me with disgust.  
 New moons, sabbaths, assemblies –  
 I cannot endure festival and solemnity.  
 Your new moons and your pilgrimages  
 I hate with all My soul.  
 They lie heavy on Me,  
 I am tired of bearing them.  
 When you stretch out your hands,  
 I turn My eyes away.  
 You may multiply your prayers,  
 I shall not listen.  
 Your hands are covered with blood:  
 wash, make yourselves clean.

“Take your wrongdoing out of My sight.  
 Cease to do evil; learn to do good;  
 Search for justice; help the oppressed,  
 be just to the orphan, plead for the widow.”

*Isaiah 1:11, 13–17; cf. JB*

There is also a corresponding saying of Hosea, quoted by Jesus, that runs throughout Christian literature:

For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice (*zevah*),  
and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings (*'olah*).

*Hosea 6:6, KJV; cf. Matthew 9:13*

In the early Christian tradition, the writer of the *Epistle of Barnabas*, who encourages a non-ritualistic approach to worship and an internal attitude towards spirituality, specifically expresses his disapproval of temple sacrifice and the ritual burning of incense as a means of worshipping God. Quoting the passages from *Jeremiah*, *Isaiah* and *Hosea*, he joins a saying from the *Psalms*<sup>9</sup> to a saying that – according to a note in an early manuscript – comes from a version of the *Apocalypse of Adam* that is no longer extant:

Sacrifice (*thysia*) for the Lord is a contrite heart;  
A smell of sweet savour to the Lord  
is a heart that glorifies Him that made it.

*Epistle of Barnabas 2:10; cf. AF1 pp.344–45*

In later Christianity, individual sacrifice has generally been understood as self-sacrifice, dedication of one's life to God, moulding the individual will to the divine will, and living a pure life of service to others. This was an early interpretation found in the New Testament. As it says in *Hebrews*:

Through him, therefore, let us offer continually the sacrifice (*thysia*) of praise to God. . . . And forget not to do good and to share what you have: for with such sacrifices (*thysia*) is God well pleased.

*Hebrews 13:15–16; cf. KJV, RSV*

St Augustine explains in characteristic detail:

True sacrifice (*sacrificium*) is offered in every act which is designed to unite us to God in a holy fellowship; every act, that is, which is directed to that final Good which makes possible our true felicity. For that reason, even an act of compassion itself is not a sacrifice (*sacrificium*), if it is not done for the sake of God. . . . Hence, a man consecrated in the name of God, and vowed to God, is in himself a sacrifice (*sacrificium*) inasmuch as he 'dies to the world' so that he may 'live for God'.<sup>10</sup> . . .

Our body also is a sacrifice (*sacrificium*) when we discipline it by temperance, provided that we do this as we ought for the sake of God, so that we may not offer our bodily powers to the service of sin as the instruments of iniquity, but to the service of God as the instruments of righteousness.

The Apostle (Paul) exhorts us to this when he says, "I entreat you, brothers, by the compassion of God, to offer your bodies as a living

sacrifice (*thysia*), holy and acceptable to God, as the reasonable homage you owe him.”<sup>11</sup>

If then the body, which the soul employs as a subordinate, like a servant or a tool, is a sacrifice (*sacrificium*), when it is offered to God for good and right employment, how much more does the soul itself become a sacrifice (*sacrificium*) when it offers itself to God, so that it may be kindled by the fire of love. . . .

So then, the true sacrifices (*sacrificium*) are acts of compassion, whether towards ourselves or towards our neighbours, when they are directed towards God.

*St Augustine, City of God 10:6, CGAP pp.379–80*

See also: **Eucharist, Lamb** (7.1), **self-sacrifice** (►4).

1. Menander, in *Miscellanies* 7:6, WCA2 p.427.
2. Clement of Alexandria, *Miscellanies* 7:6, WCA2 p.429.
3. Throughout the *Pentateuch*, and elsewhere.
4. *Genesis* 8:20–21.
5. *Genesis* 22:2–13.
6. *Exodus* 20:24, 24:5, 29:42, 30:28, 31:9, 32:6; *Leviticus* 1:1–17ff.; also *Numbers*, *passim*, etc.
7. *Exodus* 10:25.
8. *Leviticus* 18:21, 20:2–5; *1 Kings* 11:7; *2 Kings* 23:10; *Jeremiah* 32:35.
9. *Psalms* 51:19.
10. Cf. *Romans* 6:11.
11. *Romans* 12:1.

**sajdah** (A), **sujūd** (A/P), **sajdat** (P) *Lit.* prostration, bowing; from *sajada* (to bow down, to prostrate oneself), a verb with no English equivalent, since the posture goes beyond a simple bow, but does not go as far as a full horizontal position and the sense of abjectness that accompanies it; etymologically related to *masjid* (mosque, *lit.* place of prostrations); a part of formal prayers in Islam, in which the devotee kneels with the forehead touching the ground, symbolizing the devotee’s humility before God.

In each round (*rak’ah*) of prayer, there are three postures: standing with bowed head, kneeling in a sitting position, and prostration. The practice is prescribed and mentioned throughout both the *ḥadīth* and the *Qur’ān*:

O you who believe!

Bow down, prostrate (*usjud*) yourselves, and adore your Lord;  
and do good, that you may prosper.

*Qur’ān* 22:77; cf. AYA

Sufis have characteristically stressed the inner meaning of prostration and the symbolism inherent in the action. Ibn al-‘Arabī says that all things naturally prostrate themselves before their source or “root”:

Everything which prostrates (*sājid*) itself bears witness to its own root from which it is absent by being a branch. When a thing is diverted from being a root by being a branch, it is said to it, “Seek that which is absent from you, your root from which you have emerged.” So the thing prostrates (*sajada*) itself to the soil which is its root. The spirit prostrates (*sajada*) itself to the Universal Spirit (*al-Ruḥ al-Kull*) from which it has emerged. The inmost consciousness (*sirr*) prostrates itself to its Lord by means of Whom it has achieved its level.

*Ibn al-‘Arabī, Meccan Revelations 2:101.29, FMIA3 (1:73) p.152, SPK p.151*

Prostration symbolizes humility. Hence, Tahānawī writes, “Prostration (*sajdah*) is to be rid of all pride and ego-consciousness.”<sup>1</sup> Hence, many Sufis have spoken of prostration of the heart or the inner being:

In *ṣūfī* terminology, prostration of the heart (*sujūd-i qalb*) means annihilation in God at the time of contemplative vision of God (*shuhūd-i Haqq*).

*Tahānawī, Kashshāf Iṣṭilāḥāt al-Funūn, KIFT2 p.332; cf. in SSE3 p.91*

In a similar vein, Aḥmad al-Aflākī, in his book on Rūmī, quotes an unattributed verse:

With your heart,  
prostrate (*sajdah*) yourself in the dust of His door:  
This is a task for the heart, not a task for the forehead.

*Unattributed, in Manāqib al-‘Arifīn 4:65, MASA2 p.660, FKG p.456*

Rūmī says that the best place of “prostration” is not the outer mosque but the “inward consciousness” of the saints, for God dwells there:

That mosque is phenomenal, this heart (*dil*) is real, O asses!  
The true mosque is the hearts of the spiritual captains (*awliyā’*).  
The mosque that is the inward consciousness (*andarūn*) of the saints  
is the place of prostration (*sajdah-gāh*) for all: God is there.

*Rūmī, Maṣnavī II:3110–11; cf. MJR2 p.383*

Rūmī writes that in order to see the spiritual form or “image” of the saint, the “friend”, the devotee must remain humble – “keep your spirit in prostration”:

Either vision of the friend or love for Him –  
 to what other end should a man employ this world?  
 If you want to see the friend in his image,  
 keep your spirit in prostration (*sujūd*)!

*Rūmī, Dīvān-i Shams-i Tabrīz 126:1445–46, KSD1 p.83, in SPL p.295*

In Rūmī's *Maṣnavī*, one of his characters also speaks of the high spiritual state – being able to leave the body at will – that is necessary for true worship of the “Water of Life”, the divine creative power:

It is impossible to perform the prostration (*sajdah*)  
 before the Water of Life,  
 until I gain deliverance from this earthly body.

*Rūmī, Maṣnavī II:1211; cf. MJR2 p.283*

See also: **namāz**, **ṣalāh**.

1. Muḥammad al-Dārābī, *Laṭīfah-i Ghaybī* 2, LGMD p.135, in SSE3 p.90.

**sajjādah** (A/P) *Lit.* prayer carpet, prayer mat, prayer rug; from *sajada* (to bow down, to prostrate oneself), the rug on which a Muslim performs his or her ritual prayers, five times daily; regarded as a sacred object; also called *muṣallā* (place of prayer; hence, prayer hall, prayer mat).

Sufis have commonly used the prayer mat as a symbol of traditional, external worship. In a well known poem, Rūmī recalls how he had been a pious Muslim and a good scholar until he met his master and divine beloved (Shams-i Tabrīz), who taught him a superior way of knowing:

Passion for that beloved  
 took me away from learning and recitation of the *Qurʾān*,  
 until I became mad and obsessed.  
 I had followed the way of the prayer mat (*sajjādah*) and the mosque  
 with great sincerity and effort.  
 I wore the shirt of abstinence to increase my good works.

Love entered the mosque and said,  
 “O great teacher! Rend the shackles of existence!  
 Why are you still in bondage to the prayer mat (*muṣallā*)?  
 Let not your heart tremble before the blows of my sword!  
 If you want to travel from knowing to (direct) seeing,  
 then lay down your head!

*Rūmī, Dīvān-i Shams-i Tabrīz 2498:26404–7, KSD5 p.228*

In another verse, writing metaphorically, Rūmī depicts the superiority of divine love (“wine”) and intoxication with the divine beloved, over external forms of worship:

One day, you will find me sprawled in the tavern:  
     my turban pawned, my prayer mat (*sajjādah*) discarded.  
 I will be drunk, my companion will be drunk,  
     and his sweet tresses will be in my hands.  
 Oh what a marvellous witness! Oh what marvellous wine!

*Rūmī, Dīvān-i Shams-i Tabrīz 2324:24626–27, KSD5 p.126; cf. SPL p.315*

Ḥāfiẓ, also writing symbolically, speaks of the master as the “magian” and the inner spiritual sanctuary, where the beloved is met, as the “tavern of ruin”. Like Rūmī, he would gladly part with his Muslim “prayer mat” and his Sufi “cloak” in exchange for a glimpse of the divine beloved (the “magian”):

I would instantly forfeit  
     my cloak (*khirqah*) and my prayer mat (*sajjādah*),  
 if I could visit the tavern of ruin of the magian once again.

*Ḥāfiẓ, Dīvān, DHA p.177, DIH p.302; cf. DHWC (403:1) p.685*

To receive this divine love, he says, he must give up all externals, symbolized by the “prayer mat”:

The days of joy fly by,  
     and no one offers me wine for free.  
 The remedy is this:  
     I must sell my prayer mat (*sajjādah*).

*Ḥāfiẓ, Dīvān, DHA p.180, DIH p.304; cf. DHWC (393:2) p.672*

In fact, he says, in a famously provocative verse:

Dye your prayer mat (*sajjādah*) in wine  
     if the master of the magi (*pīr-i mughān*) commands,  
 for he is not unaware of the rules and stations of the way.

*Ḥāfiẓ, Dīvān, DHA p.1, DIH p.29; cf. DHWC (1:3) p.2*

Various Sufis have assigned different symbolic meanings to the prayer mat. ‘Irāqī says it “denotes an inner impediment, whatever the heart may be focused on”.<sup>1</sup> Tahānawī says it symbolizes a life built upon sound spiritual and Muslim principles. If life is not built on these principles, he says, then the “prayer mat (*sajjādah*) represents nothing more than perfunctory adherence to tradition”.<sup>2</sup> Various other symbolic interpretations have also been suggested.<sup>3</sup>

A prayer mat is regarded as a very personal item, and to give one's prayer mat to another person is a significant gesture. Hence, the expression, *sajjādah-nishīn* (one who sits on the carpet), meaning a nominated successor – a term that is sometimes used for the successor of a spiritual master. This derives from a custom in which a Sufi *shaykh* sometimes gives his prayer mat to his successor as a sign of the successorship. Qūnawī, for example, speaks of having two masters: from one he received his prayer mat, and from the other his cloak, meaning that he was regarded as successor to both.

*Sajjādah-nishīn* is also used in reference to *imām* (prayer leader), an epithet presumably derived by association.

1. 'Irāqī, *Iṣṭilāḥāt*, RLRI p.84; cf. in SSE3 p.164.
2. Tahānawī, *Kashshāf Iṣṭilāḥāt al-Funūn*, KIFT2 p.333; cf. in SSE3 p.165.
3. *Mir'āt-i 'Ushshāq*, in TAT p.205, in SSE3 p.165; Muḥammad al-Dārābī, *Latīfah-i Ghaybī* 2, LGMD p.135, in SSE3 p.165.

**ṣalāh, ṣalāt** (A) (pl. *ṣalawāt*) *Lit.* blessing; prayer, worship, supplication (for forgiveness); derived from *ṣallā* (to hallow, to bless, to pray); synonymous with the Persian *namāz*. *Ṣalāh* is used specifically for the ritual prayer, as opposed to *du'ā*, which is a spontaneous supplication arising from personal inclination. *Ṣalāh*, performed five times daily while facing Mecca, includes a sequence of postures together with the repetition of set prayers and passages from the *Qur'ān*. It is mandatory for all Muslims from the age of seven, deemed to be the age of reason. Some parts are repeated aloud, while others are repeated silently and must be performed in Arabic.

The five times of prayer are dawn, noon, midway between noon and sunset, sunset, and between sunset and midnight. If, for some reason, one or more are missed, they can be made up later. There are also a number of dispensations for the sick, those who are travelling, and so on. Dispensations are also provided in the *Qur'ān* for conducting prayers when at war and at other difficult times.<sup>1</sup> Additional *ṣalāh* are also encouraged, and some devotees practise periods of extended or even continual prayer. Women are not permitted to perform the ritual prayer, to touch or recite from the *Qur'ān*, or to enter a mosque during menstruation. However, they are not prohibited from offering personal prayers to God during these times.

The ritual prayer begins with a *nīyat*, a statement of the intention to perform a certain number of *raka'āt* (rounds of prayer). Two to five *raka'āt* are obligatory, depending upon which of the five prayer times it is. To perform more than the required number is voluntary. The prayer is considered invalid and must be repeated from the beginning if it is interrupted by talking to others, yawning, smiling (though not suppressing a yawn or a smile) or breaking wind before the intended duration of prayer, as stated in the *nīyat*, is complete.

*Ṣalāh* must be performed by a person in a state of ritual purity (*ghusl* and *wuḍūʾ*), as determined by Islamic religious law, and must also be conducted in a place regarded as ritually clean (*i.e.* not a bath house, a cemetery, a slaughter house, and so on). This aspect of the prayer reflects the human feeling that prayer and purity are deeply associated, though mystics have always pointed out that the real purity is of the mind, rather than the body.

According to a *ḥadīth* (traditional saying or story), the Prophet said that all the world was a mosque for him, and he was in the habit of performing *ṣalāh* at all times and places.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, Najm al-Dīn Kubrā defines *ṣalāh*, not as a ritual performed at fixed times, but as “incessant standing and waiting at the door of the Unseen and the Presence of the Lord”.<sup>3</sup>

Prayer is prescribed at many places in the *Qurʾān*:

This is the Book; in it is guidance sure, without doubt, to those who fear God, who believe in the Unseen, who are steadfast in prayer (*ṣalāh*), and who give in charity a part of what We have given them.

*Qurʾān* 2:2–3; cf. AYA, KPA

Believers! Do not approach your prayers (*ṣalāh*) when you are drunk, but wait until you can grasp the meaning of what you are saying; nor when you are in a state of ritual impurity – except when travelling on the road – until you have washed yourself. If you are ill, or on a journey, or one of you comes from attending to the call of nature, or you have been in contact with women, and you find no water, then take for yourselves clean sand or earth, and rub your faces and hands with it. For God is gracious and forgiving.

*Qurʾān* 4:43; cf. AYA, KPA

According to a number of *ḥadīth*, those who perform the ritual prayers and lead a good Muslim life are guaranteed entry to paradise:

It is narrated on the authority of Jābir that Nuʿmān ibn Qawfal came to the holy Prophet (may peace be upon him) and said: “Will I enter paradise if I say the obligatory prayers (*ṣalāh*) and deny myself that which is forbidden and treat that as lawful what has been made permissible (by the *sharʿah*)?” The holy Prophet (may peace be upon him) replied in the affirmative.

*Ḥadīth Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* 1:1.15; cf. HSM

Because of its external nature, with a focus on bodily postures, Islamic ritual prayer has become a centrepiece for generalizations concerning the exterior nature of Muslim worship and its lack of the inner spirituality associated with



other religious traditions. Muslim commentators, however, point out that Islam is not opposed to spirituality. On the contrary, the five ritual prayers oblige a person to rise before dawn, start their day in the name of God, and interrupt business or social activities during the course of the day in order to re-orient themselves towards God. According to a *ḥadīth*, the Prophet said:

“If there was a river at the door of anyone of you, and he took a bath in it five times a day would you notice any dirt on him?” They said, “Not a trace of dirt would be left.” The Prophet added, “This is the example of the five prayers (*al-ṣalāt al-khams*) with which *Allāh* blots out evil deeds.”

*Ḥadīth Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 1:10.506, HSB*

As in all traditions, prayer without inner attention is deemed of little value. This is enshrined in another *ḥadīth* attributed to the Prophet, “No prayer is complete without presence (*ḥudūr*).”<sup>4</sup> In this context, *ḥudūr* refers to recollection of the attention and presence of mind before God.

Purity of motive is also regarded as essential. It is not the fact of being seen to pray, but the depth of feeling that is significant. As al-Ghazālī writes:

There are some acts and spiritual practices in which the pious take great pains, and think they are doing them to please God, though in fact they are deluded. An instance from the life of a devotee will make it clear. Because of one weakness, he lost the benefit of the prayers (*ṣalāh*) he had been performing for thirty years. The devotee would always stand in the front row. But one day, because he had arrived late, he could only get a seat in the second row, where he felt dejected because no one took any notice of him. Then he realized that his heart had been delighted to stand in the front row, but he had been unconscious of this pleasure all those years. Such defects are hidden so deeply and in such a subtle manner that very little of our prayer and worship is free from such defects. That is why few people really earn God’s grace.

*Al-Ghazālī, Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn 4:7, IUDG4 p.502; cf. RRS pp.324–25*

For mystics, real prayer implies inward purity, contemplation, and spiritual ascent:

According to Ḥallāj, the prayers (*ṣalāh*) of the mystics (*‘arīfīn*) are the flight of their spirits in the vastness of Everlastingness (*Sarmadīyah*) and the purity of the Infinite.

*Rūzbiḥān, Ghalaṭāt al-Sālikīn, RQR p.109; cf. in SSE3 p.84*

In fact, ultimately, the mystic automatically abandons outer prayer altogether:

When devotees become bewildered in the course of viewing the Beauty of Eternity and become annihilated therein, being slain by the sword of the divine oneness (*waḥdānīyah*) and obliterated in pre-eternity, how can they perform their prayers (*ṣalāh*)? In this state, prayers (*ṣalāh*) fall away from the devotees without any volition on their part.

*Rūzbihān, Mashrab al-Arwāḥ* 19:12, *MARB* p.303, in *FNI3* p.71; cf. in *SSE3* p.86

See also: **du‘ā’, munājāh, namāz, nīyah.**

1. *E.g. Qur’ān* 4:101–3.
2. *E.g. Ḥadīth Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* 4:1056–58, *HSM*.
3. Najm al-Dīn Kubrā, on *Qur’ān* 2:153, in *MJR8* p.156.
4. *Ḥadīth*, in *Maṣnavī* I:381, *MJR2* p.24; in *Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn* 1:4, *IUDG1* p.212.

**ṣalāh ‘alā al-Nabīy** (A/P) *Lit.* blessing (*ṣalāh*) upon (‘*alā*) the Prophet (*al-Nabīy*); Muslim prayers invoking blessing and peace upon the Prophet; commonly used to preface the *du‘ā’* or personal and spontaneous prayer, as in these examples used in North Africa:

Blessing (*ṣalāh*) and peace (*salām*) be upon you,  
 O Prophet of God (*Nabīy Allāh*);  
 Blessing and peace be upon you,  
 O Intimate of God (*Ḥabīb Allāh*);  
 Blessing and peace be upon you,  
 O Messenger of God (*Rasūl Allāh*).  
 Thousandfold blessing and thousandfold peace  
 upon you and upon your people,  
 and God’s felicity upon your Companions,  
 O best of the chosen of God (*khayra mani khtāra Allāh*).

*Muslim Prayer (Unsourced), in CEI* p.317

Our Lord (*Allāhumma*), bless our master (*sayyidinā*) Muḥammad,  
 as much as the number of your creations,  
 the felicity of Your Essence,  
 and the ink necessary to write Your words.  
 Magnified be God above what is attributed to Him,  
 and peace upon the messengers (*mursalīn*),  
 and praise to God, the Lord of the worlds (*Rabb al-‘ālamīn*).

*Muslim Prayer (Unsourced), in CEI* p.318

**samāʿ** (A/P) *Lit.* listening, hearing, audition; the Sufi practice of listening to music and chanting as a means of inducing bliss, ecstasy, and mystic transport; usually consists of one or more singers (*qawwāl*), who chant mystical poetry, sometimes accompanied by musical instruments such as tambourine and flute, sometimes with the assembled devotees joining together in singing a refrain; combined with dance by many Sufis, especially the *Mawlavīyah* dervishes; hence, a circular dance performed by dervishes in a state of ecstasy; also, the gathering at which such music is played; regarded as un-Islamic by conservative Muslims, and often associated by them with drinking and immorality; regarded by fundamentalists as an unacceptable innovation, since it was not practised by Muḥammad; held by some Muslim scholars to be useful if it brings people closer to God; accepted by the Sufis on the basis that Muḥammad permitted chanting of the *Qurʾān* and the call to prayer.

Although music is forbidden in Islam because of its capacity to capture and distract the mind, in practice it is prevalent everywhere. Even so, among Sufis and other Muslims alike, the legitimacy and the usefulness or harmfulness of *samāʿ* has been the subject of discussion for centuries. Some Sufis have altogether rejected the practice. Others have maintained that external music prepares the soul for an appreciation of the inner realities and for listening to the divine music within. They say that music and other beautiful things draw a soul closer to God, the source of all beauty. Many have said that a true mystic does not lose himself in the music and dance, but only uses it as a means of concentration, to help elevate himself spiritually. Others have pointed out that without correct training, instead of heightening a person's spirituality, *samāʿ* ends up as an indulgence, scattering a person's energies and arousing sexual desire; hence, the view of many Sufis that *samāʿ* is good for adepts, but bad for novices. On the other hand, some Sufis have argued that the exercise and dancing helps young novices work off their sexual energy in a harmless manner, thus helping to prevent suppression. Sufis commonly request that after their death, to celebrate their passing into the higher life, traditional funeral mourning should be replaced by *samāʿ*.

Sufis believe that music has been used from the earliest times, together with spiritual poetry, to induce a meditative state of mind. The eleventh-century Hujwīrī writes:

One of the *shaykhs* says: “*Samāʿ* is that which makes the heart aware of the things in it that keep it away (from God),” so that the effect thereof is to make the heart present (*ḥāẓir*) with God.

*Hujwīrī, Kashf al-Maḥjūb XXV, KMM p.528; cf. KM p.405*

He also quotes an early Egyptian Sufi, Dhū al-Nūn al-Miṣrī:

*Samāʿ* is a divine influence that stirs the heart to seek God. Those who listen to it spiritually attain unto God, and those who listen to it sensually fall into unbelief.

*Dhū al-Nūn al-Miṣrī, in Kashf al-Mahjūb XXV, KMM p.527; cf. KM p.404*

Mystics throughout the East have set their poetry to music. This makes the verses easy to remember, and in many places their songs have become popular with the common people. In this way, the mystics get their message across in a palatable and readily remembered manner. Such poetry is often sung at gatherings of devotees to create a peaceful and devotional atmosphere in which they may become more receptive to the discourse of their master or other speaker. The well-established tradition of the Middle-Eastern and South Asian *qawwāl* (chanter) who sings the *ghazals* and mystical poetry of the Sufis, and the North Indian *pāṭhī* who sings the *bāṇī* of the Indian saints bears witness to the antiquity of the practice.

For the devotee who listens to the poetry in a meditative frame of mind, its spiritual meaning, the devotional tone in the voice of the singer, as well as the music itself, all provide spiritual inspiration, and can lead to an inwardly blissful and deeply peaceful state. But much depends upon the listener's receptivity. In his commentary on the *Qurʾān*, Anṣārī says that the effect of *samāʿ* depends upon the character of the listener:

There are two types of *samāʿ* – that of the vulgar and that of the elect. The vulgar delight in the sounds and strains of *samāʿ*, but the enjoyment of the elect derives from a subtle grace apparent between the sound (*ṣawṭ*), the inner meaning (*maʿnī*), and the metaphorical allusions thereof.

The *samāʿ* of the vulgar is heard by the physical ear, appreciated by critical reason, and expressed in physical movements, in order to find freedom from sorrow and worldly entanglements.

The *samāʿ* of the elect, however, is conducted after the passions have been mortified, with the heart athirst and the breath burnt out. Hence, the spiritual result of their *samāʿ* is the effusion of the grace of the zephyr of intimacy, the evocation of eternity, and eternal joy.

*Anṣārī, in Kashf al-Asrār, KA3 p.832; cf. in SSE1 p.190*

Al-Ghazālī, a Sufi scholar who did much to reconcile Sufi beliefs and customs with orthodox Islam, writes extensively on music and *samāʿ*. Ultimately, he says, listening to devotional songs “strengthens the heart and cleanses it”, so that the “hidden divine Voice” is heard:

The secrets of the heart are revealed through music. Music is the food of the soul. But if you do not continue to follow the spiritually ordained rules, it becomes the cause of pedantry and evil....

It is no surprise if, on hearing of the attributes of God, the heart passes into an ecstasy that tears it asunder. . . .

Only those who are very advanced spiritually can suppress their feelings of ecstasy. Adepts do not allow their inner feelings to show in the movement of their external limbs. . . .

Dhū al-Nūn al-Miṣrī says that the object of spiritual music is that it should make the heart withdraw itself from all sensual desires and rivet itself on God. That is, when a person hears the *samāʿ*, he should feel himself to be in the presence of God. . . .

*Samāʿ* strengthens the heart and cleanses it, making a heart that is otherwise unfit capable of witnessing the divine vision. In the course of the cleansing of the heart, the hidden divine Voice is heard, and the hearer becomes a lover of God, and begins to constantly remember Him, fear the Lord, and seek His vision.

*Al-Ghazālī, Iḥyāʾ ʿUlūm al-Dīn* 2:8, IUDG2 pp.363, 375, 394, 396;  
cf. RRS pp.45, 47–48, 54–55

In his journal, Amīr Ḥasan Sijzī records many incidents and discussions held with his *shaykh*, Niẓām al-Dīn Awliyāʾ. In an entry dated Wednesday, 6th of *Dhū al-Qaʿdah*, 710 AH (March 27th 1311), he writes:

He (the *shaykh*) began talking about poetry and prose. From his blessed mouth came this pronouncement: “Every eloquent turn of phrase that one hears causes delight but the same thought expressed in prose, when cast into verse causes still greater delight. A similar judgment applies to chanting: Every phrase that causes delight, if you are able to hear it chanted, how much greater still is your delight!”

At this point I interjected: “Is there nothing which touches the heart so deeply as listening to devotional music (*samāʿ*)?”

“For those who tread this path desiring the Divine,” replied the master, “the taste which is evoked in them through *samāʿ* resembles a fire set ablaze. If this were not the case, where would one find eternity, and how would one evoke the taste for eternity?”

*Niẓām al-Dīn Awliyāʾ, Morals for the Heart* 2:19, FFNA pp.108–9, MHN p.154

While many Sufis have debated the issue of outward *samāʿ*, a number of the great Sufi mystic poets have indicated that the real *samāʿ* is of an altogether higher and more inward nature. It involves the *samāʿ al-bāṭin* (inner hearing) – listening to the divine Music within, which transports the soul through the heavenly worlds. Hence, Ḥāfiẓ writes of the “*samāʿ* of the soul”,<sup>1</sup> and says that the mystic dance of his master arouses the souls in the highest heaven:

When our beloved begins *samāʿ*,  
 the holy ones in the ninth heaven dance, and wave their hands.  
*Ḥāfiẓ, Dīwān, DHA p.93, DIH p.179; cf. DHWC (135:3) p.278*

*Samāʿ* lifts the “people of ecstasy” far above the “clamour and roar” of this world. Here, the “minstrel” is the divine beloved, the master, who leads the devotee in the inward *samāʿ*, where the soul dances (metaphorically) in bliss and ecstasy:

What note did the minstrel play in the scale of *samāʿ*  
 such that the door of clamour and roar was shut  
 on the people of ecstasy (*wajd*) and mystical state (*ḥāl*)?  
*Ḥāfiẓ, Dīwān, DHA p.34, DIH p.82; cf. DHWC (45:6) p.114*

Shabistarī says that the “*samāʿ* of the soul” is not of this world:

The *samāʿ* of the soul is not comprised of verbs and consonants:  
 no, in every note (*pardah*), another enigma is contained.  
*Shabistarī, Gulshan-i Rāz 854, GRS p.105, SGR p.764; cf. in SSE1 p.188*

Naṣrābādī repeats a Sufi saying that *samāʿ* is spiritual food for the soul, an observation that has been taken both inwardly and outwardly:

Everything has its own food, and the food of the soul is *samāʿ*.  
*Naṣrābādī, in Tadhkirat al-Awliyāʾ 2, TAN2 p.317; cf. in SSE1 p.189*

During the ecstatic dancing and chanting of the *samāʿ*, Sufis often throw off their cloaks (*muraqqaʿ* or *khirqah*). To indicate where real spirituality lies, Sufi poets have used the custom as a spiritual metaphor. The cloak or covering to be discarded is interpreted as the body, and the arena for the soul’s dance as the heavenly regions. Alternatively, the cloak is hypocrisy or lack of full commitment to the spiritual path, which must also be discarded before the true spiritual dance can be joined. Ḥāfiẓ throws out the challenge to join the mystic dance by throwing off all trace of hypocrisy and rising above the body. But if you are unable to do so, he says, then the egocentric covering of hypocrisy and the body will confine you to a life of spiritual isolation:

Come to the *samāʿ*! Throw off your cloak (*khirqah*) and dance!  
 Else sit alone in a corner, wearing the cloak (of hypocrisy).  
*Ḥāfiẓ, Dīwān, DHA p.128, DIH p.228; cf. DHWC (291:5) p.508*

According to tradition, it was Rūmī himself who encouraged ecstatic dancing at the *samāʿ*, and it is upon this belief that the whirling dance of the

*Mawlavīyah* Sufi order has been established. However, the debate concerning the extent to which Rūmī involved himself in the external *samā'* continues to the present day, and is unlikely to find a resolution. Rūmī may have spent time singing and dancing with his disciples, but in his writings he is also very clear that the real *samā'* is mystical and within:

When you come into the *samā'*,  
 you are outside of the two worlds.  
 The world of *samā'* is outside of this world and that.  
 Although the roof of the seventh heaven is high,  
 the ladder of *samā'* passes beyond the roof.  
 Dance everything other than Him under your feet!  
 The *samā'* belongs to you and you belong to it!  
*Rūmī, Dīvān-i Shams-i Tabrīz 1295:13685–87, KSD3 p.123, in SPL p.328*

When you have left clay (the body),  
 you will quickly enter the garden of the heart (*bāgh-i dil*).  
 Then on that side, what is there but *samā'* and pure wine?  
*Rūmī, Dīvān-i Shams-i Tabrīz 2205:23390, KSD5 p.57, in SPL p.328*

At the time of *samā'*, the Sufis hear another sound,  
 from God's throne.  
 You go ahead and listen to the (outer) form of the *samā'*:  
 they have another ear.  
*Rūmī, Dīvān-i Shams-i Tabrīz 1057:11163–64, KSD2 p.291, in SPL p.328*

In our battle lines, we hold up no shield before our faces –  
 in our *samā'* we are unaware of flute and tambourine!  
*Rūmī, Dīvān-i Shams-i Tabrīz 2942:31222, KSD6 p.195, in SPL p.327*

He who has not seen his own essence  
 or gazed upon the love-like moon,  
 what has he to do with *samā'* and drums?  
*Samā'* is for union with the heart-ravisher.  
*Rūmī, Dīvān-i Shams-i Tabrīz 339:3667–68, KSD1 p.203; cf. in SSE11 p.127*

Today there are *samā'*, wine, and cup:  
 a drunken *sāqī*, a congregation of libertines –  
 (We want) that kind of libertine  
 who comes from the other side of existence:  
 Not the dizzy, hashish-eating buffoon of a libertine!  
*Rūmī, Dīvān-i Shams-i Tabrīz 2637:27975–76, KSD6 p.15, in SPL p.327*

Ibn al-ʿArabī has an interesting viewpoint on *samāʿ*, which he relates to verses from the *Qurʾān* in which God is said to be the Knower (*al-ʿAlīm*), the Seer (*al-Baṣīr*), and the Hearer or Listener (*al-Samīʿ*),<sup>2</sup> *samīʿ* being related to *samāʿ* (hearing, listening). Ibn al-ʿArabī says that God’s love for all creatures arises from His seeing them, while their love for Him arises from their listening to Him. All creatures have come into being as a result of the divine Command, “Be (*Kun*)!”<sup>3</sup> and their love for Him arises from their listening (*samāʿ*) to this Command. The divine Word “Be!” is the divine creative power, which can be heard inside resounding as an eternal music, just as the divine light can be seen. The love of creatures for their Creator arises not from seeing, but from hearing or listening to Him:

The first thing we knew from God, and which became connected to us from Him, was His Speech (*Qawl*) and our listening (*samāʿ*). . . . This is the level of *samāʿ* to which the folk of *Allāh* (mystics) refer and to which they listen. . . . The cosmos can have no existence without Speech on God’s part and listening (*samāʿ*) on the part of the cosmos.

Through Speech we move about, and as a result of Speech, we move about in listening (*samāʿ*). Hence Speech and listening (*samāʿ*) are interrelated. Neither can be independent from the other, since they are two aspects of a relationship. Through Speech and listening (*samāʿ*), we come to know what is the Essence of the Real; for we have no knowledge of Him except through the knowledge that He gives to us, and His giving of knowledge takes place through His Speech.

*Ibn al-ʿArabī, Meccan Revelations 2:366.27, FMIA3 (2:182) p.549; cf. SPK p.213*

He means that the soul comes into being as a result of the divine Speech, and it finds the true nature of its own existence and that of God by listening to that Speech.

See also: **khirqah**, **muraqqaʿ**.

1. Ḥāfiz, *Dīvān*, DHA p.287; cf. DHWC (692:18) p.1006.

2. *Qurʾān* 9:98, 22:61.

3. *Qurʾān* 2:117, 36:82, 40:68.

**samādhi** (S/H), **samādh** (Pu) *Lit.* placing (*ādhi*) together (*sam*); putting together, establishing, making firm; hence, making the mind firm, concentration or absorption in deep meditation; also, a tomb or mausoleum, usually of some famous or holy person.

In India and many other places, shrines or places associated with holy people commonly become the focus of worship and pilgrimage, even though



the mystics themselves may have clearly advised against such practices during their lifetime.

See also: **samādhi** (8.1).

**saṃdhyā** (S), **sandhyā** (H) *Lit.* juncture, union, holding together; an intermediate between two states; from *saṃdhi* (junction); particularly, the meeting of day and night; hence, dawn, daybreak, sunrise, evening, twilight, dusk, nightfall; also *brāhmaṇ* prayers and associated ceremonies conducted in the morning, at noon, and in the evening. In Hinduism, dawn and dusk are traditional times for prayer and meditation.

According to the school of Indian philosophy known as *Mīmāṃsā*, it is a sin not to perform *saṃdhyā*. Vedantists and yogis, however, do not consider it a sin not to perform *saṃdhyā*. In fact, it is not obligatory for a person who is immersed in *samādhi* to perform *saṃdhyā*.

The *Maṇḍala-brāhmaṇa Upanishad* maintains that the yogi whose mind (*manas*) becomes absorbed in the sound of *Auṃ* through the practice of *prāṇāyāma* has no need to perform *saṃdhyā*. Here, *śaṇmukhī* is the practice of listening to the inner sound while closing the ears with the two thumbs, the eyes with the two forefingers, the nostrils with the two middle fingers, and the mouth with the remaining two fingers of both hands:

Having united the *prāṇa* and *apāna* and holding the breath in *kumbhaka*, a *yogī* should fix his attention at the root of the nose. Making *śaṇmukhi-mudrā* with the fingers of both hands, he should hear the sound of *Praṇava* (*Auṃ*) in which the mind (*manas*) becomes absorbed. Such a man is not affected by religious rituals (*karma*). The ritual (*karma*) (of *saṃdhyā-vandana*) is performed at the rising or setting of the sun, but since there is no rising or setting (but only the ever-shining) of the sun of *chit* (higher consciousness) in the heart of a man who knows thus, he has no such ritual (*karma*) to perform. Rising above day and night through annihilation of (the perception of) sound and (the concept of) time, he becomes one with *Brahman* through the all-encompassing *jñāna* (spiritual wisdom, gnosis), and he attains the state of *unmanī* (beyond mind). Through the state of *unmanī*, he becomes *amanaska* (without mind).

*Maṇḍala-brāhmaṇa Upanishad* 2:2; cf. TMU p.188, YU pp.230–31

In a wordplay on the root meaning of *saṃdhyā*, the *Brahma Upanishad* observes that true union is of the self with the divine Self by means of contemplation (*dhyāna*). The two words come from the root *dhyā* (to hold together, to meditate):

When, by *prajñā* (spiritual understanding), a person unites (*saṃdhate*) his self with the supreme Self (*Ātman*), that is both *saṃdhyā* and contemplation (*dhyāna*), and hence the worship associated with *saṃdhyā* as well.

The *saṃdhyā* by contemplation (*dhyāna*) is devoid of any offerings or activity of body or speech. It is the unifying principle for all creatures, and this is the best *saṃdhyā* for *ekadaṇḍis* (a class of spiritual practitioner).

*Brahma Upanishad 23–24; cf. MUM p.63*

According to the Hindu description of the four *yugas* (ages), the ‘twilight’ period before each *yuga* is also called a *saṃdhyā*, being ten percent of the duration of each *yuga*. At the close of each *yuga* is another ‘twilight’ period known as a *saṃdhyāṃsha*, of the same duration as *saṃdhyā*.

See also: **yuga** (5.2).

**samiti** (S) *Lit.* coming together; meeting, assembly, council; association, society; also, in Jainism, regulation, rule; one of five regulations regarding the careful conduct of mendicant monks and nuns in order to reduce the likelihood of harming other living beings, even the smallest of creatures.

The five *samitis* (regulations) are commonly grouped with the three *guptis* (restraints), which are restraint of mind, speech, and body. The five *samitis* listed by Jain *āchāryas* are:

1. *Īryā-samiti*. Regulation of walking (*īryā*); vigilant and careful walking; walking slowly and deliberately, examining the ground ahead in order to avoid treading on tiny life forms; implies the use of existing paths and tracks, made either by animals or human beings. In a broader sense, *īryā-samiti* implies walking only by day, since moonlight and artificial lighting is insufficient to see the ground clearly.
2. *Bhāshā-samiti*. Regulation of speech (*bhāshā*); speaking only as required, choosing words carefully, using only those that are measured, gentle, sweet, kind, beneficial and truthful, and avoiding exaggeration, gossip, anger, pride and coarse, harsh, or displeasing words. The intention here is to avoid hurting the feelings of others as well as to cause no disturbance to one’s own mind.
3. *Eshaṇā-samiti*. Regulation of begging (*eshaṇā*); vigilance when begging; accepting only boiled water and pure food, given with devotion and suitable for a mendicant, examining it carefully, and consuming it calmly, without enjoyment.

4. *Ādāna-nikshepaṇa-samiti*. Regulation of picking up (*ādāna*) and putting down (*nikshepaṇa*); care and mindfulness when handling things, such as scriptures or a mendicant's alms bowl or whisk broom and so on, in order to avoid harming tiny life forms; includes the wiping of objects and surfaces, as well as carefulness when sitting or lying down.
5. *Utsarga-samiti* or *uchchāra-prashravaṇa-samiti*. Regulation of excretory functions (*utsarga*); care when choosing a place for urination (*prashravaṇa*) and evacuation (*uchchāra* means 'faeces') in order to avoid harming tiny life forms or causing inconvenience to anyone; also called *pratishṭhāpanā-samiti* (regulation regarding the disposal of bodily waste); includes spitting as well as the disposal of unused water, worn-out clothes, and any other unwanted items.

Āchārya Kundakunda summarizes:<sup>1</sup>

He (a *muni*, ascetic, mendicant monk) who walks a trodden path, free from living beings, in daytime, after looking (carefully) a distance of four arms lengths ahead, (is said) to observe carefulness in walking (*īryā-samiti*).

He who, having renounced backbiting, ridiculing, talking ill of others, self-praising and harsh words, speaks what is good for himself as well as for others (is said) to have carefulness in speech (*bhāṣhā-samiti*).

He who calmly takes food, which is prepared not by himself, nor that which he made others prepare for himself, nor that prepared by others with his approval, and which is wholesome, free from living beings, and given by another (with devotion), (is said) to have carefulness in eating (*eshaṇā-samiti*).

(A *muni* who) acts with care in picking up, and putting down books, and jug (*kamaṇḍalu*), etc., (is said) to have carefulness in lifting and laying down (*ādāna-nikshepaṇa-samiti*).

(A *muni* who) discharges his excrement, etc. in a place that is secret, free from all living beings, and where it causes no inconvenience to anybody, (is said) to have carefulness in excreting (*pratishṭhāpanā-samiti*).

*Kundakunda, Niyamasāra 4:61–65; cf. NAKU pp.33–34*

Although relating specifically to mendicant monks and nuns, the general principles are also advised for the Jain laity. The *samitis* predate the modern understanding that almost every object and place is teeming with microscopic life forms, such as bacteria, that cannot be seen with the unaided eye and are invariably hurt or killed by the normal processes of living.

See also: **gupti**.

1. See also, e.g. Hemachandra, *Yoga Shāstra* 1:34–40, *YSHG* pp.20–22.

**saṃkrānti** (S), **sankrānti** (H), **sankrānt** (H/Pu) *Lit.* transition, transferral; passing from one place to the other, from one thing to another; the passing of the sun from one constellation of the zodiac to another, according to Indian astrology; the day of transition from one month to another; hence, the first day of the solar month according to the Indian calendar, falling on the fourteenth, fifteenth or sixteenth of the western month.

The first day of a solar month is regarded as particularly auspicious in India. On *sankrānt*, the religious-minded go to a temple or *gurdwāra* with the intention of hearing the name of the new month mentioned. This is thought to bring blessings and protection during the coming month. With some regional variations, some *sankrāntis* are regarded as more sacred than others. These include: *Makara Sankrānti* (mid-January), on which day the sun enters Capricorn (*Makara*), beginning the six-month period of *Uttarāyaṇa*; *Mesha Sankrānti* (mid-April), on which day the sun enters Aries (*Mesha*), and which marks the beginning of New Year according to the Hindu solar calendar; and *Karka Sankrānti*, on which day the sun enters Cancer (*Karka*), and is the end of the six months of *Uttarāyaṇa*.

**saṃskāra** (S), **sanskār(a)** (H/Pu) *Lit.* purification, cleansing, making sacred, hallowing, consecration; hence, a sacred or sanctifying ceremony or rite in both Hindu and Jain traditions; purification rites in connection with the transitional phases of a person's life, including the naming ceremony (*nāma-karaṇa*), the ceremony of feeding a child with solid food for the first time (*anna-prāshana*), the first tonsure – when the hair of a boy's head is shaved for the first time (*chūḍā-karaṇa*), sacred thread ceremony (*upanayana*), ear-piercing ceremony (*karṇa-vedha*), marriage (*vivāha*), and ceremonies in honour and for the benefit of dead relatives (*shrāddha* or *antyeshti*), and so on. The *Manu Smṛiti* enjoins twelve such purificatory ceremonies on the three highest classes (*brāhmaṇ*, *kshatriya*, *vaishya*) of traditional Hindu society,<sup>1</sup> while the *Gautama-dharma Sūtra* speaks of forty.<sup>2</sup> It is believed that these ceremonies enable a person to lead a pure and virtuous life.

Several *sanskāras* are also performed to aid conception (*garbhādhāna*) of either a boy or a girl, as desired (more commonly a boy); during pregnancy, to ensure a smooth pregnancy, labour and birth (*sīmantonnayana*, *dohala-jīvana*), to aid breast-feeding (*stana-pratidhāna*), and so forth. Presuming that the gender of a child was determined, not at conception, but about half way through pregnancy, some ancient texts prescribe a *sanskāra* (*pūṃsavana*)

during the third or fourth month, before the foetus is felt to move, which was believed to ensure that the baby would be a boy. Nowadays, only a few, if any, of these rites are performed.

The performance of the rites is carefully timed to fall upon a day regarded as auspicious, and includes various actions, some of which are symbolic. In the *dohala-jīvana*, for instance, performed in the seventh month of pregnancy, a group of women prepare a feast for the pregnant woman that includes her favourite foods. They adorn her with flowers or unripe fruits, sing songs to her, give her gifts, anoint and massage her, and generally create a party atmosphere. The rite is a form of ‘baby shower’, in which the expectant mother is ‘showered’ with gifts.

A *sanskāra* is also a rite performed with the help of sacred *mantras*, prayers, *etc.*, in order to restore something to its previously pure state. This may be anything from a ritual temple object to a temple itself, perhaps after desecration by some incident.

Many yogic texts indicate that the performance of rites and ceremonies is not an essential aspect of the spiritual path. However, the *Samnyāsa Upanishad* comments:

He alone is entitled to renunciation who has undergone the forty purificatory rites (*samskāras*), has detachment from all (worldly) things, has acquired purity of mind, has burnt out desires, envy, intolerance and egotism, and is equipped with the four disciplines of spiritual life (*sādhana*s).

*Samnyāsa Upanishad* 2:1; cf. *SUAR* p.211

*Sanskāras* are also the latent impressions and predispositions on the mind that have arisen through one’s actions and thoughts, including those of earlier births.

See also: **sanskāra** (6.3).

1. *Manu Smṛiti* 2:27.
2. *Gautama-dharma Sūtra* 8:14–24.

**ṣanam** (A/P) *Lit.* idol; hence also, beloved, sweetheart. See **but**.

**sanātan(a) dharm(a)** (S/H) *Lit.* eternal (*sanātana*) religion (*dharma*); the ‘eternal’ or unchanging set of religious duties, qualities or practices traditionally regarded as incumbent upon all Hindus, whatever their social caste or particular religious affiliation, as laid down in the four *Vedas* and associated

literature. A number of lists of such qualities and practices are mentioned in these texts, generally centred upon the essential spiritual purpose of human life and the qualities and practices that go to make up a good human being. These include such things as truthfulness (*satya*), not stealing (*asteya*), causing no harm to living beings (*ahiṃsā*), purity of mind (*shaucha*), goodwill (*maitrī*), compassion (*dayā*), forbearance (*kshamā*), self-control (*saṃyama* or *dama*), generosity and charity (*dāna*), continence (*brahmacharya*), self-discipline (*tapas*), meditation (*dhyāna*), and so on. In more recent times, *sanātana dharma* has been understood to imply the eternal truth of the Vedic texts as a universal spiritual teaching, devoid of all religious bias.

A good example of both these understandings of the term appears in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, where King Yudhisṭhira asks the sage Nārada about the “duties in the several stages of life”. Nārada explains that good human qualities, coupled with meditation, the quest to find God and liberation from the cycle of birth and death, constitute the essence of true religion.<sup>1</sup> Swami Prabhavananda’s rendering is in accord with his stated aim, to “interpret in English the inner spirit of the Sanskrit text”:<sup>2</sup>

The chief purpose of all religious observances and spiritual practices is self-control and perfection in meditation.

This body has been compared to a chariot. The senses are the horses. Mind is the rein. Intellect is the charioteer. The vital energies are the wheels. Virtue and vice are the spokes. Objects of the senses form the road. The ego is the rider.<sup>3</sup> Anger, hatred, jealousy, sorrow, greed, delusion, pride and thirst for life are the enemies met with along the road. When the rider can bring the horses and the chariot under control, his heart becomes pure, and he finds divine grace within. With the sword of discrimination, sharpened by knowledge, he conquers all enemies. He becomes fearless and enjoys divine bliss.

There are certain virtues that must be cultivated by all humanity in all stages of life. These are truthfulness, kindness, forgiveness, discrimination, control of the mind, mastery of passions, non-injury, continence, charity, frankness, contentment, devotion to spiritual teachers, desisting from idle conversation, seeking the highest Truth, and serving all beings as God.

There are also certain truths, revealed through the experience of the sages, which must be heeded by all humanity. Human birth is the door through which we may attain higher or lower births according to our deeds. Human birth is also the door through which we may attain the highest goal of life, absolute freedom.

When man gives up the struggle for happiness through the doors of the senses, and learns to look within, only then does he find peace and bliss.

*Sanātana dharma* is contrasted with *svadharma* (one's own duty), which refers to the particular personal duties arising from one's role, position, or stage in life. Hindu texts such as the *Bhagavad Gītā* address conflicts that can arise between the two, such as that between *ahiṃsā* and the role of a *kshatriya* (warrior).<sup>4</sup>

See also: **dharmā** (►4).

1. Cf. also *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* 5:2, 11:11–12; *Garuḍa Purāṇa* 14:11.
2. Swami Prabhavananda, *Shrīmad Bhāgavatam*, SBWG p.iv.
3. *Kaṭha Upanishad* 1:3.3–9.
4. *Bhagavad Gītā* 2:31–38

**ṣawm** (A/P), **rūzah** (P) *Lit.* abstention, fasting; recommended in Islam, after the example of the Prophet, and obligatory for all adult Muslims during the daylight hours of the month of *Ramaḍān*.

It is clear from both the *Qur'ān* and the *ḥadīth* (traditional sayings and stories concerning the Prophet) that fasting was a common religious practice among Arabs in pre-Muslim times. A fast was observed on the tenth of *Muḥarram*,<sup>1</sup> in memory of the day that God saved Moses and the Israelites from Pharaoh and his army by parting the waters of the Red Sea. Pre-Islamic Arabs were also familiar with fasting as an act of penitence, propitiation, or as a preparatory rite to a sacramental meal, or to an initiation, mourning or other such ceremony.

Fasting is prescribed in the *Qur'ān*, where it is said to benefit the one who fasts. It is also indicated that fasting is not a new practice:

O believers, fasting (*ṣawm*) is prescribed for you as it was prescribed for those before you, that you may learn self-restraint. . . . He that voluntarily does good will be well rewarded; but it is better for you to fast, if you but knew it.

*Qur'ān* 2:183–84; cf. AYA, KPA

Another verse details the qualities and conduct required to earn divine forgiveness and “great reward”, one of which is fasting:

For Muslim men and women –  
 who are believing, . . . devout, . . . true, . . . patient and . . . constant, . . .  
 who humble themselves, . . . who give in charity,  
 who fast, . . . who guard their chastity, and . . .  
 who are ever mindful of God –

For them has God prepared forgiveness and great reward.

*Qur'ān* 33:35; cf. AYA, KPA

Fasting during *Ramaḍān* includes abstinence from sex during the daylight hours, as well as negative or immoral behaviour such as swearing, slander, lying, and so on. The general intention is to strengthen self-control and help build good character. An eleventh-century Sufi, Hujwīrī, repeats the Quranic decree and goes on to discuss fasting at some length:

God has said: “O believers, fasting (*ṣiyām*) is prescribed to you.”<sup>2</sup> And the Messenger (the Prophet) said that he was informed by Gabriel that God said: “Fasting (*ṣawm*) is mine, and I have the best right to give recompense for it,”<sup>3</sup> because the religious practice of fasting (*rūzah*) is a mystery unconnected with any external thing, a mystery in which none other than God participates: hence its recompense is infinite. . . .

Fasting (*rūzah*) is really abstinence, and this includes the whole method of Sufism. . . . Abstinence involves many obligations, *e.g.* keeping the belly without food and drink, and guarding the eye from lustful looks, and the ear from listening to evil speech about anyone in his absence, and the tongue from vain or foul words, and the body from following after worldly things and disobedience to God. One who acts in this manner is truly keeping his fast (*rūzah*), for the Apostle said to a certain man, “When you fast (*ṣawm*), let your ear fast (*ṣawm*) and your eye and your tongue and your hand and every limb;” and he also said, “Many a one has no good of his fasting (*ṣawm*), except hunger and thirst.” . . .

It behoves him who is keeping a fast (*rūzah*) to imprison all the senses in order that they may return from disobedience to obedience. To abstain only from food and drink is child’s play. One must abstain from idle pleasures and unlawful acts, not from eating lawful foods. . . . When a man is divinely protected from sin all his circumstances are a fast (*ṣawm*). . . .

Continual fasting (*rūzah-’i wiṣāl*) has been forbidden by the Apostle, for when he fasted continually, and his companions followed him in that respect, he forbade them, saying: “I am not as one of you: I pass the night with my Lord, who gives me food and drink.”<sup>4</sup>

*Hujwīrī, Kashf al-Mahjūb XXI, KMM pp.413–16; cf. KM pp.320–22*

Hujwīrī goes on to discuss continual fasting, pointing out that it is impossible for a normal person. If someone fasts continuously, he asserts, it is a miracle.<sup>5</sup> After describing the forty-days’ fast (*chillah*), he then sets out some of the benefits of fasting:

Hunger sharpens the intelligence and improves the mind and health. The Apostle said: “Make your bellies hungry and your lives thirsty and your bodies naked that perchance your hearts may see God in this



world.” Although hunger is an affliction to the body, it illuminates the heart and purifies the soul, and leads the spirit into the presence of God. To eat one’s fill is an act worthy of a beast. One who cultivates his spiritual nature by means of hunger in order to devote himself entirely to God and detach himself from worldly ties, is not on the same level with one who cultivates his body by means of gluttony, and serves his lusts. “The men of old ate to live, but you live to eat.” For the sake of a morsel of food, Adam fell from paradise, and was banished far from the neighbourhood of God.

*Hujwīrī, Kashf al-Maḥjūb XXI, KMM pp.419–20; cf. KM p.324*

Although fasting is not uncommon among Sufis as a physical discipline, many have pointed out that true fasting is not from food and drink, but from all that is other than God:

What is fasting (*rūzah*)?

It is to close the door on all that is other than God.

*‘Aṭṭār, Muṣībat-Nāmāh, MNFA p.45, in SSE3 p.94*

Ni‘mat Allāh Valī describes three degrees of fasting:

Fasting (*ṣawm*) is of three kinds:

The first is the fasting (*ṣawm*) of the common people, which is to abstain from drink, sex and food from the first to the last light of day (*i.e.* during *Ramaḍān*), with an expressed intention (*nīyat*).

The second is the fasting (*ṣawm*) of the elect, which entails continuous fasting (*ṣawm*) from all sin and error on the part of all the faculties and parts of the body.

The third is the fasting (*ṣawm*) of the elect of the elect, who are the intimates of the circle of the Merciful and retainers of the court of the Most Praised. This group observes an outer and inner fast every day from that which is other than the love of God.

*Shāh Ni‘mat Allāh Valī, Rasā’il, RNV1 p.178, in SSE3 p.95*

Essentially, fasting is an outer, physical discipline, and to Sufis such as Ḥāfīz, divine love is far more important than fasting or any other external practices:

The reward of fasting (*rūzah*)

and the pilgrimage (*ḥajj*) of acceptance

is earned by the one who makes a pilgrimage (*ziyārat*)

to the wine shop of love.

*Ḥāfīz, Dīvān, DHA p.57, DIH p.122; cf. DHWC (118:2) p.246, in SSE3 p.93*

See also: **chillah**, **Ramaḍān**.

1. See *Ḥadīth Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* 2:26.662; 3:31.116–17, 147, 181; 4:55.609; 5:58.172–73, 278; 6:60.28–29, 202, 261; 9:91.370, *HSB*; *Ḥadīth Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* 6:2499–529, *HSM*.
2. *Qurʾān* 2:183.
3. Cf. *Ḥadīth Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* 3:31.118, *HSB*; *Ḥadīth Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* 6:2564–68, *HSM*.
4. Cf. *Ḥadīth Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* 3:31.182–88, *HSB*; *Ḥadīth Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* 6:2426–27, *HSM*.
5. Hujwīrī, *Kashf al-Maḥjūb* XXI, *KMM* p.418, *KM* p.323.

**sayf al-Islām** (A), **sayf-i Islām** (P) *Lit.* sword (*sayf*) of Islam; a stylized wooden sword previously used in certain Muslim ceremonies and symbolizing Muḥammad’s words after returning from a battle:

We have returned from the lesser war (*al-jihād al-aṣghar*), to the greater war (*al-jihād al-akbar*).

*Ḥadīth*, in (e.g.) *Kashf al-Maḥjūb* XIV:6, *KMM* p.252, *KM* p.200

As many Sufis have pointed out, the real or greater holy war is the conquest of one’s own lower nature (*nafs*), a battle far more difficult to win than any conflict of this world.

See also: **jihād**.

**sbyin sreg** (T) *Lit.* offering, alms (*sbyin*) + destroy by fire (*sreg*); fire sacrifice. See **homa**.

**second coming** (Gk. *parousia*) The belief that Christ will come again in glory, at the end of the world on the Day of Judgment, when the dead will rise from their graves, and he will judge all according to their deeds and faith, and establish the kingdom of God on earth; a belief based upon various passages in the gospels, Paul’s letters, *Revelations*, and other prophetic biblical sources. The second coming of Christ was imminently expected by early Christians. Many later Christian groups, also, have identified particular days on which the second coming and the end of the world were supposed to take place, but all have been disappointed.

The second coming was a powerful part of Paul’s teaching, adding urgency to his message. It is mentioned at several places in his letters,<sup>1</sup> where the

implication is that it is imminent. The pseudo-epigraphic letters *1 Peter*<sup>2</sup> and those spuriously written in the name of Paul (*Titus*, *1* and *2 Timothy*) also look forward to an early end to the world.<sup>3</sup> But to date, the world rolls on, while the geological and astronomical data provide no evidence of an early termination.

The imminence of the second coming is promised in the gospels, when Jesus assures his disciples:

I tell you truly that there are some standing here  
who will not taste death  
until they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.

*Matthew 16:28; cf. KJV*

And again:

I tell you truly that this generation will not pass away  
until all be fulfilled.

*Luke 21:32, KJV*

Yet the simple fact is that Jesus never came again, from which it may be presumed that either he was mistaken, or he never actually uttered these sayings (at least in the way they are presented), or he meant something entirely different. It must be remembered that little in the gospels can be attributed to Jesus with any degree of certainty. They were written several decades after Paul had died, and there is ample evidence of their being compiled to support the beliefs of nascent Christianity. It seems likely, therefore, that these sayings were introduced to bolster belief in the imminence of the second coming. Indeed, different early Christian groups even had their own gospels, each supporting their own particular version of Christ's teachings.

So where did the belief originate? A clue is to be found in descriptions of how Jesus will appear at his second coming. He will come, it is said, in a body of light and glory:

Truly I say to you, I will come as does the sun that shines, and shining seven times brighter than it in my brightness; with the wings of the clouds carrying me in splendour and the sign of the cross before me, I will come down to the earth to judge the living and the dead.

*Epistula Apostolorum (Coptic) 17; cf. OG p.141*

Many mystics from different traditions have spoken of their longing to meet the divine beloved in a spiritual form, in the spiritual realms, within themselves. This is indeed a second coming and a second meeting of disciples with their saviour. But it is spiritual, not physical. It is also personal, within

the disciple, not externally on any general Last Day. It is possible, therefore, if the gospel sayings of Jesus bear any resemblance to something that he said, that Jesus was referring to this inner meeting. But this occurs at a spiritually advanced stage, and not all disciples, he says, will achieve this during their lifetime, before they “taste of death”. “There be *some* standing here,” said Jesus, not *all*.

The eschatological expectations of the early Christians also find support in some of the analogies and parables of Jesus, a number of which are found in the mini-apocalypse that makes its first appearance in *Mark*, but is repeated with embellishments in *Matthew* and *Luke*.<sup>4</sup> Here, there is no doubt that Jesus is credited with saying that he will return at the end of the world. It is mentioned on several occasions. There is, for example, the parable of the servants who are left to take care of their lord’s household. Some are faithful; some abusive, lazy, and drunken. And each receives his just reward when the owner unexpectedly returns.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, as Jesus says, in a refrain repeated at several places, of which the keyword is “watch”:<sup>6</sup>

Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which  
the Son of Man will come.

*Matthew 25:13; cf. KJV*

Here, it is clear that the parable is referring to the imminence of a second coming. The most extensive of these parables concerns the ten virgins who await the coming of the bridegroom. Five are wise and five are foolish.<sup>7</sup> All carry their lamps in expectation of his coming, but the foolish ones take no oil. While they are waiting, they all sleep. When the call is heard that the bridegroom is coming, the foolish ones discover that their lamps have gone out, and ask the wise virgins for oil. But the wise ones refuse on the grounds that they only have sufficient for themselves. And while the foolish ones run around at the last moment trying to buy oil, the bridegroom comes, the wise ones “go in with him to the marriage”; and the foolish ones, when they arrive late, are refused admittance. The parable ends with the disciples being admonished to “watch”, because the Son of Man could come at any time. Again, the implication is the imminence of the second coming and an early Judgment Day. Something that simply never happened.

There is, however, an alternative interpretation based on the fact that the imagery of the bridegroom or the beloved has been widely used by mystics of many traditions to refer to the inner beloved, the radiant or spiritual form of the saviour. In that case, the second coming is not outer, but inner; it is the coming or manifestation of the spiritual form within the disciple. In that case, the parables, as they are presented in the synoptic gospels, simply misrepresent Jesus’ original and intended meaning. Bearing in mind that the earliest extant New Testament manuscript is dated to the fourth century,

leaving two hundred and fifty years or more of copying and recopying with ample opportunity for editorial tampering, it is easy to imagine that Jesus' parables concerning his imminent second coming (which never happened) were originally intended to inspire his immediate disciples to make spiritual preparation for his second coming within, either in their meditation or at the time of their death.

In this context, the details of these parables make better sense. The lazy servants are those who fail to attend to their spiritual practice, as Jesus had taught them. The oil that cannot be borrowed or transferred is the spiritual practice that lights the lamp of the soul. Every disciple has to do it for himself; and those who neglect their inner practice until it is too late, and death is at hand, will have nothing but regret. In this interpretation, the second coming is not outer, but inner.

Interestingly, Christian mystics have commonly interpreted the bridegroom as Christ, the divine Word within, and his coming to the marriage as the meeting with the inner, spiritual beloved. It is one of the most prevalent images in Christian mystic literature. Jan van Ruysbroek even relates it to the second coming. There are, he says, three comings of Christ. The first coming was when God came as a man, as Jesus; the second coming is his manifestation within, in mystic vision; and the third coming is either the time of death, or when he comes on the Last Day. Commenting on the line, "The bridegroom comes", Ruysbroek says that these three comings relate to the past, the present, and the future:

In this regard we should notice the three comings of our bridegroom, Jesus Christ. He came first when he became man for the sake of mankind, out of love. The second coming takes place every day, again and again, in every loving heart, with new graces, with new gifts, according to men's capacity for receiving. In the third, we see his coming to judgment, or at the hour of death.

*Jan van Ruysbroek, Spiritual Espousals 1:6, SER p.52*

Referring back to the gospels, it is in *John* where the coming of this spiritual form is explained most clearly, although what is meant spiritually is generally taken, once again, to refer to his coming at the end of the world.

Like so many parts of John's gospel, these farewell discourses seem to be in a muddle, particularly chapters fourteen and sixteen. The meaning is clear enough, but a number of the sayings are repeated, the sequence often seeming to backtrack unnecessarily. Many scholars have therefore suggested that they are not in their original form or order. It is also possible that the gospel compiler, who may not have been the original writer, tried rather unsuccessfully to combine two versions of the same discourse into one. So once again uncertainties abound concerning the authenticity of the text. Nonetheless,

taking Jesus' discourse at face value, he begins by letting his disciples know that he will soon be leaving them, so far as his physical form is concerned:

Little children, for just a little while am I with you.  
 You will seek me, . . . (but) where I am going, you cannot come.  
*John 13:33; cf. KJV*

As Jesus also says, he is returning to his Father, to God.<sup>8</sup> Although the disciples cannot follow him immediately, because they have not yet made sufficient spiritual progress, they will be able to follow and meet with him later, as he explains:

Let not your heart be troubled:  
 if you believe in God, believe also in me.  
 In my Father's house are many mansions:  
 if it were not so, I would have told you.  
 I go to prepare a place for you.  
 And if I go and prepare a place for you,  
 I will come again, and receive you unto myself;  
 That where I am, there you may be also.  
*John 14:1–3; cf. KJV*

He is going to prepare a place for them in the inner “mansions”, in the heavenly regions. And naturally, if he is going to prepare a place for them inside, he is the one who will “come again, and receive” them to himself. He will come and take them there – and the form in which he comes will be a form that is suited to those regions. The physical form he has left in this world – the form in which he will come to them will be of a more subtle and radiant character altogether. He then adds:

And where I am going you know, and the way you know.  
*John 14:4; cf. KJV*

They know that he has the power to return to God and he has also taught them the path and techniques of spiritual practice, the “way” in which they can follow after him – by knocking at his door,<sup>9</sup> by passing through the “narrow gateway”,<sup>10</sup> and so on. He then reiterates:

Yet a little while, and the world will see me no more;  
 but you will see me. and because I live, you will live also.  
 At that day you will know that I am in my Father,  
 and you in me, and I in you.  
*John 14:19–20; cf. KJV*

Soon, he says, he will have departed from the world, and the people of the world will not be able to see him again. As far as they are concerned, he will be dead and gone. But his disciples will be able to see him. Because Jesus has attained realization of the immortal life with God, so will his disciples be also enabled to achieve this spiritual estate. And when they attain this, then “you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.” Then they will know from their own personal experience rather than by faith and intuition that he is really one with God, that he is within them and that they will eventually attain union with him, that they will all become one.

But how are they to really reach this level of spiritual attainment? It is, he says, by love and obedience to his “instructions”:

If you love me, follow my instructions. . . .  
 He that has received my instructions, and follows them:  
   he is one that loves me:  
 And he that loves me will be loved by my Father,  
   and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him. . . .  
 If a man loves me, he will keep my Word (*Logos*):  
   and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him,  
   and make our abode with him.

*John 14:15, 21, 23; cf. KJV*

The disciple who loves his master will follow his instructions, for he realizes that they are for his own spiritual benefit. And if he follows those instructions out of love for his master, he will draw down upon himself the love of God. And when the disciple’s love is sufficiently pure, then, says Jesus, “I will love him, and will manifest myself to him” and also, “we will come unto him and make our abode with him”. He will appear within that disciple, manifesting himself in his radiant, spiritual form.

Jesus then speaks again of the disciples’ meeting with his radiant form, this time calling it the “Comforter”:<sup>11</sup>

And I will pray to the Father,  
   that he shall give you another Comforter (*Paraklētos*),  
   that it may abide with you forever –  
 Even the Spirit of Truth, whom the world cannot receive,  
   because it neither sees nor knows it – but you know it;  
 For it dwells with you, and is within you.  
 I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.

*John 14:16–18; cf. KJV*

The “Comforter” is translated from the Greek, *paraklētos*, the Paraclete – other words used to translate this term being Advocate, Intercessor, Intermediary,

Counsellor, Protector, Helper, and Support. They all convey something of the nature and function of the Word and its manifestation in the spiritual form of the master. The physical master will die one day, but the inner form will “abide with you forever”. It is manifested out of the Word, the “Spirit of Truth”. But this form cannot come to the people of the world, to those who are not acquainted with the true Word of God. “But you know it,” says Jesus, speaking of this mystic Comforter, “for it dwells with you, and is within you.”

Then he again assures his disciples – not the whole world – that although the master may die and leave his disciples, physically, “I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.” He will be with them and manifest himself to them in a higher form. There can be no other reasonable interpretation of these sayings. Jesus is identifying his light form with the Spirit, making it personal when he says, “I will come to you.” Then, once more, he repeats himself:

These things have I spoken unto you,  
 being yet present with you.  
 But the Comforter (*Paraklētos*), which is the Holy Ghost,  
 whom the Father will send in my name –  
 He will teach you all things,  
 and bring all things to your remembrance,  
 whatever I have told you.

*John 14:25–26; cf. KJV*

The spiritual form of the master, the “Comforter” – manifested out of the “Holy Ghost” – will “teach you all things”. There are many things concerning the inner spiritual journey that cannot be conveyed in human words. Nor is it even necessary for disciples to know about them until they reach that point in their spiritual journey. One thing at a time, then move on to the next. The inner master and the Word will teach the secrets of creation and of the road back to God, whenever and wherever it is required. The master could tell his disciples so much concerning the beauties of the inner regions, and so many other wonderful things, but they are still insufficiently advanced along the path to be able to understand. So he only gives them the broad outline and waits until the appropriate moment before other things can be revealed.

Jesus also says that the constant presence of the master within, at all times of the day or night, will “bring all things to your remembrance” – it will constantly remind his disciples of the inner path that he has taught them, keeping their minds on a tight rein, keeping them ready at all times to go within, whenever the grace is given. As he also says:

I have yet many things to say to you,  
 but you cannot bear them now.

*John 16:12; cf. KJV*



The master has many things to show a disciple that he could never dream of, that are beyond the comprehension of the human mind. All these, he will show to the disciple when they travel together through the inner regions and return to God. He continues:

However, when he, the Spirit of Truth, comes,  
 he will guide you into all truth:  
 For he will not speak on his own authority,  
 but whatever he hears, that will he speak:  
 And he will show you things to come.

*John 16:13; cf. KJV, RSV*

As he has said before, whatever the Spirit of Truth – the spiritual form of the master – teaches or shows to the disciple, either inside or outside, all comes directly from God. He does not invent it out of his own thinking or imagination. This coming of the master is the same as the coming of the Holy Spirit or Word. Then he says:

And in that day you will ask me nothing.  
 Verily, verily, I say unto you,  
 whatsoever you shall ask the Father in my name,  
 He will give it you.  
 Hitherto you have asked nothing in my name:  
 ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full. . . .  
 And whatever you will ask in my name, that will I do,  
 that the Father may be glorified in the Son.  
 If you will ask anything in my name, I will do it.

*John 16:23–24, 14:13–14; cf. KJV*

On the day when the disciple meets the spiritual form of his master inside, he will have nothing to ask. When still outside in the world, a disciple may have many doubts and questions. Sometimes he may even wonder if the master and his teachings are just another fraud and illusion, like so much else. But when he experiences the inner meeting, then all his doubts will disappear and he will have nothing to ask, because everything becomes clear. All his deepest desires and longings are fulfilled in that meeting. Whatever a soul could ever dream of asking for is already fulfilled – and even more than that.

Nevertheless, Jesus says that whatever a disciple asks for will be granted, because he knows that by the time a disciple reaches this level he is only concerned with the things of the Spirit. The master has the power to grant any request, but the advanced disciple only wants more and more of the spiritual reality to be revealed to him. It is this that he asks for and this that he receives. He then adds:

These things have I spoken to you in metaphors;  
But the time is coming,  
    when I will no longer speak to you in metaphors,  
    but I will show you plainly of the Father.  
On that day you will ask in my name:  
    and I will not tell you that I will pray to the Father for you.

*John 16:25–26; cf. KJV*

In this world, he says, everything has to be described “in metaphors”, by way of similes, parables and examples, because words are inadequate to convey the nature of the inner reality. But in the spiritual realm, everything can be seen “plainly” – by direct experience and perception. Moreover, in this world, a master avoids many of the questions that his disciples ask, because they are unanswerable. So he answers that they will have to ask God about it, or he sidesteps their questions in some other way. But in that realm, answers can be given, for the spiritual consciousness is advanced enough for the answer to be contained and comprehended. And that ‘answer’ is given by way of direct mystic revelation, not in human words. He continues:

For the Father himself loves you,  
    because you have loved me,  
    and have believed that I came out from God.  
I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world:  
    again, I leave the world, and go to the Father. . . .  
I am not alone, because the Father is with me.

*John 16:27–28, 32; cf. KJV*

All this happens, he says, because God loves each and every individual soul. Through their love for the master, the disciples have entered the sphere of divine love. They now experience the love of God within themselves. And that experience has grown out of the faith and realization that their master has come from God and is always with them. It is faith and love which has led them to this mystic understanding. He adds:

These things I have spoken to you,  
    that in me you might have peace.  
In the world you shall have tribulation:  
    but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.

*John 16:33; cf. KJV*

He points out that he is only saying all of this for their benefit and peace of mind. Although they may have to undergo various forms of suffering in this world, they should not be too perturbed, for he has “overcome the

world” – spiritually, he has risen above the world, and nothing that people can do to him can touch him inwardly. So he will always be there with them to protect them spiritually. He continues:

Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you:  
but not as the world gives, do I give to you.  
Let not your heart be troubled,  
neither let it be afraid.

*John 14:27, KJV*

He is again comforting them that although he is leaving them, he has something to give them that is far greater than anything the world has to offer. The joy and peace that will come from their meeting with the inner master has no comparison in this world. So they have absolutely nothing to fear. He then says:

You have heard how I said unto you,  
I go away, and will come again unto you.  
If you loved me, you would rejoice,  
because I said, “I am going to the Father”:  
for my Father is greater than I . . .  
But now I go my way to Him who sent me;  
yet none of you has asked me,  
“Where are you going?”

*John 14:28, 16:5; cf. KJV*

He says that although they may feel unhappy at the thought of his impending departure, yet if they really thought about what he had told them, then they would “rejoice”. They would be happy that he was able to leave the world forever and return to his Father. He is returning to God and requests that no one should ask him to remain here. And he adds that he has told them of his departure and of his return to them in his spiritual form so that when it actually happens to them, they may not think that they are just imagining things:

And now I have told you before it comes to pass,  
so that, when it comes to pass, you might believe.

*John 14:29; cf. KJV*

Until an individual has experienced something, there will always be an element of doubt concerning its reality, or at least a lack of full understanding about its real nature. Therefore, Jesus says that the “Comforter” will be the “witness”, the proof that everything he has said is true:

But when the Comforter is come,  
 whom I will send to you from the Father,  
 even the Spirit of Truth, that proceeds from the Father,  
 he will testify of me:  
 And you will also bear witness,  
 because you have been with me from the beginning.

*John 15:26–27; cf. KJV*

“From the beginning” means from the time of their initiation. When a disciple has been initiated for some time, his experiences with the master, even externally, give him a great deal of faith. So the inner and the outer experiences combine to make a disciple absolutely unshakable in his conviction about the path he is following, about who the master is, and about what the master is doing for him.

Jesus then explains that it is actually necessary for their spiritual advancement that he should leave them. This is the bitterest of all pills that a master asks his disciples to swallow:

A little while, and you will not see me:  
 and again, a little while, and you will see me,  
 because I go to the Father. . . .  
 Verily, verily, I say unto you,  
 that you will weep and lament,  
 but the world will rejoice:  
 And you will be sorrowful,  
 but your sorrow will be turned into joy.  
 A woman when she is in labour suffers,  
 because her hour has come:  
 But as soon as she has delivered the child,  
 she forgets the suffering,  
 in her joy that a man has been born into the world.  
 And you are sorrowful now,  
 but I will see you again, and your heart will rejoice,  
 and that joy no man can take from you.

*John 16:16, 20–22; cf. JB, KJV*

Jesus again repeats that he is leaving them, but that he will come to them inside, after a “little while”. He says that it is natural for them to be devastated when he leaves his physical form, for they have become so attached to him and so deeply in love with him. But – just as a woman in labour suffers great pain in childbirth, which is translated into joy as soon as the child is born – so too will this pain of separation be transformed into joy when the disciples are able to see him inside. “I will see you again,” he says, and the

bliss of this meeting will be permanent and eternal, having no dependence upon anything of the senses or the changeable world. It will be a “joy no man can take from you”.

Bernard of Clairvaux, in his exposition of the *Song of Songs*, the classic biblical song of the lover and the beloved or the bride and the bridegroom, describes how the “Bridegroom, the Word” may come to a soul, but then go away again. Quoting *John*, he also finds a spiritual meaning in Jesus’ words:

It is clear that his comings and goings are the fluctuations in the soul of which he speaks when he says, “I go away, and come again to you,” and, “A little while and you shall not see me, and again a little while and you shall see me.”

*Bernard of Clairvaux, On the Song of Songs 74:4, WBC4 pp.88–89*

Jesus then says that it is necessary for him to “go away”:

But because I have said these things to you,  
sorrow has filled your heart.  
Nevertheless, I tell you the truth:  
it is expedient for you that I go away;  
For if I do not go away,  
the Comforter will not come to you;  
But if I depart, I will send him to you.

*John 16:6–7; cf. KJV*

While the master is with his disciples physically, they may attend to their meditation, but the focus of their lives tends towards being with the outer form of the master. Being with the spiritual form sounds good, but does not have the immediate appeal that arises from the thought of being with the physical master. The love for the outer form is no doubt essential, for it feeds the burning desire to meet the master inside. “Nevertheless”, in order for this love to be directed inwardly through meditation, so that the spiritual form can be met, sometimes “it is expedient” for the master to leave his disciples physically in which their love can mature and deepen, culminating in their seeing him within – either temporarily, through local separation, or permanently, when the master leaves the body.

This entire discourse, then, or collection of sayings, circles around the single topic of Jesus’ leaving his disciples physically, but subsequently returning in his radiant, spiritual form, within them. That is his second coming. He makes no mention here of any Last Day; and he is not talking to the world at large – he is talking to his own disciples.

The same meaning is apparent in another passage from *John* that is commonly quoted in support of a belief of the Last Day:

And this is the will of the Father who has sent me,  
 that of all that He has given me I should lose nothing,  
 but should raise it up again at the last day.  
 And this is the will of Him that sent me,  
 that every one who sees the Son, and believes in him,  
 may have everlasting life:  
 And I will raise him up at the last day.

*John 6:39–40; cf. KJV*

Like chapters fourteen and sixteen, these two almost identical statements appear here, placed one after the other. The “last day” is the day of a disciple’s death. As elsewhere in *John*, Jesus says that he has come for a certain group of allotted “sheep”,<sup>12</sup> and none of these will be allowed to go astray. So long as they have seen the “Son” and have faith in him – which implies that they will also follow his instructions and practise meditation – he will come again and meet them at the time of their death, and will raise them up and take them up to God. This is the second coming of Jesus and, indeed, of any other master.

See also: **bridegroom** (7.2), **Day of Judgment**, **divine form** (7.2), **image** (7.2), **paraclete** (7.2), **virgin** (►4).

1. *E.g. 1 Corinthians 15:23ff.; 1 Thessalonians 5:1ff.; 2 Thessalonians 2:8ff.*
2. *1 Peter 4:7, 13.*
3. *1 Timothy 6:14–15; 2 Timothy 4:1, 8; Titus 2:13.*
4. *Matthew 24:1–51, 25:31–46; Mark 13:1–37; Luke 21:5–31.*
5. *Matthew 24:45–51; cf. Mark 13:34–37.*
6. *Mark 13:33–37; Matthew 24:42, 44; Luke 12:36–40, 21:36.*
7. *Matthew 25:1–13, KJV.*
8. *E.g. John 14:2, 16:10.*
9. *Matthew 7:7.*
10. *Matthew 7:14.*
11. *Cf. John 15:26.*
12. *John 10:1–29.*

**Shabbat** (He) *Lit.* rest, rested; the Sabbath; the seventh day of the week, on which God ‘rested’ or renewed Himself, according to the Bible.<sup>1</sup> So, too, were the Jews commanded to rest and renew themselves spiritually on the Sabbath.<sup>2</sup> See **Sabbath**.

1. *Genesis 2:1–3.*
2. *Exodus 20:8–11.*

**shabd(a)** (S/H/Pu) *Lit.* a word, especially the right word; a sound or noise produced by some action; verbal communication, verbal evidence; mystically, the Word of God, the divine or Creative Word as the divine Sound, the Sound Current, the transcendent Melody, the creative power, the source of all creation; also found in such expressions as *anāhata Shabda* and *anāhad Shabd* (unstruck Sound), *ādi Shabd* (primal Sound), *mūl Shabd* (root Sound, essential Sound), *Shabd Dhun* (Melody of the Sound), *Shabd Dhārā* and *Shabd kī Dhār* (Sound Current), *sat Shabd* (true Word), and so on. In Hindi and Punjabi, a *shabd* is also a song, a hymn, or a religious or spiritual poem. For example, the writings of mystics in the form of spiritual or devotional poems, which are often sung – like those found in the *Ādi Granth* (Sikh scriptures) – are known as *shabds*. The nearest single word used to translate this usage of *shabd* is ‘hymn’.

See also: **Shabda** (3.1).

**shahādah** (A), **shahādāt** (P) (pl. *shahādāt*) *Lit.* testimony, witness, attestation; the Muslim confession of faith that makes up the central part of the call to prayer (*adhān*), chanted five times a day from the minarets of mosques throughout the world, echoing across the cities, towns and villages of the Muslim world; the declaration of the unity and transcendence of God; one of the five pillars of Islam: “I testify that there is no god but *Allāh*; He is one, without a partner; and I testify that Muḥammad is His servant (*‘abd*) and His Messenger (*Rasūl*) (*Ashhadu an lā ilāha illā Allāhu waḥduhu lā-sharīka lahu wa-ashhadu anna Muḥammadan ‘Abduhu wa-Rasūlu*).”

“There is no god but God” (known as the *taḥlīl*) comes directly from the *Qur’ān*,<sup>1</sup> where the similar refrain, “There is no god but He,” is also repeated in many places. The remainder of the *shahādah* is derived from the many Quranic repetitions of its essential theme. “*Lā ilāha illā Allāh*” is sometimes used as a repetition (*dhikr*) in Sufi meditational practice or before going to sleep. According to a *ḥadīth*, “He who dies knowing that there is no god (*lā ilāha*) but God (*illā Allāh*) enters paradise.”<sup>2</sup>

Although there are various viewpoints, many Sufis have taken the refrain to imply that nothing really exists except God. All created forms, within and without, are nonexistent. Only God truly exists:

And call not, besides God, on another god.  
There is no god but He:  
everything is perishing except His face.

*Qur’ān* 28:88; cf. *AYA*

The first part, “no god”, is called the negation (*naḥy*) because it is said to negate the existence of the world; “but God” or “but He” is known as the affirmation (*ithbāt*) because it asserts that only God exists:

Since “there is no reality but the Reality,” everything that may be called a reality – *i.e.* every single thing – is ultimately none other than the Reality, for there cannot be two completely independent realities, since that would mean that there are two gods.

*W.C. Chittick, Sufi Path of Love, SPL p.181*

There are many veils preventing the realization of this fundamental truth. Speaking of the believer in the oneness of God as a “unitarian”, Shaykh Shiblī says:

If any (human) attribute prevents the seeker of God from annihilating himself in unification, he is still veiled by that attribute, and while he is veiled he is not a unitarian (*muwaḥḥid*), for all except God is vanity. This is the interpretation of “There is no god but God.”

*Shaykh Shiblī, in Kashf al-Maḥjūb XVI, KMM p.367, KM p.285*

Abū Saʿīd al-Khayr writes more extensively of the essential polytheism of most human beings whose god is really their self or ego:

The vision of the heart (soul) is what matters, not the speech of the tongue. You will never escape from your self (*nafs*) until you slay it. To say “There is no god but *Allāh*” is not enough. Most of those who make the verbal profession of faith are polytheists at heart, and polytheism is the one unpardonable sin. Your whole body is full of doubt and polytheism. You must cast them out in order to be at peace. Until you deny your self, you will never believe in God. Your self, which is keeping you far from God and saying, “So-and-so has treated me ill,” “So-and-so has done well by me” points the way to creatureliness; and all this is polytheism. Nothing depends on creatures, all depends on the Creator. . . .

So long as anyone considers his own purity and devotion, he says “Thou and I,” but when he looks exclusively at the bounty and mercy of God, he says “Thou!” and then his worship becomes a reality.

*Abū Saʿīd al-Khayr, Asrār al-Tawḥīd, ATS1 pp.283–84, 312; cf. in SIM pp.52–53*

Since there is nothing other than God, the *shahādah* implies implicit trust in the Divine, as in the common Muslim saying, “If *Allāh* wills;” or as it says in the *Qurʾān*:

He is my Lord! There is no god but He!  
In Him is my trust, and to Him do I turn!

*Qurʾān 13:30; cf. AYA*



Shaḡīq of Balkh (d.857) expands on the theme:

There are three things which a man is bound to practise. Whosoever neglects any one of them must needs neglect them all, and whosoever cleaves to any one of them must needs cleave to them all. Strive, therefore, to understand, and consider heedfully.

The first is this, that with your mind and your tongue and your actions you declare God to be one; and that, having declared Him to be one, and having declared that none benefits you or harms you except Him, you devote all your actions to Him alone. If you act a single jot of your actions for the sake of another, your thought and speech are corrupt, since your motive in acting for another's sake must be hope or fear; and when you act from hope or fear of other than God, who is the lord and sustainer of all things, you have taken to yourself another god to honour and venerate.

Secondly, that while you speak and act in the sincere belief that there is no God except Him, you should trust Him more than the world or money or uncle or father or mother or any one on the face of the earth.

Thirdly, when you have established these two things, namely, sincere belief in the unity of God and trust in Him, it behoves you to be satisfied with Him and not to be angry on the account of anything that vexes you. Beware of anger! Let your heart be with Him always, let it not be withdrawn from Him for a single moment.

*Shaḡīq of Balkh, in MOI pp.42–43*

The essence of the Sufi understanding of the *shahādah* is expressed by Ni‘mat Allāh Valī when he writes that experience of the Truth far surpasses “theory”:

Sing out, “There is no god but God!” This knowledge comes from contemplative vision (*shuhūd*), not thought or theory.

*Shāh Ni‘mat Allāh Valī, Rasā‘il, RNV2 p.179; cf. in SSE12 p.57*

See also: **adhān**, **mushāhadah** (8.1), **shirk**.

1. *Qur’ān* 3:62.

2. *Ḥadīth Ṣaḡīḥ Muslim* 1:39, 1:172; cf. *HSM*.

**Shaiva** (S/H) *Lit.* of *Shiva*; relating to or belonging to the god *Shiva*; one of the most widespread schools of Hinduism, whose followers worship *Shiva* as the supreme Being; also, a Shaivite, a follower of Shaivism; practitioners are

often identifiable through their use of 'sacred ash (*bhasman*, *vibhūti*)', which they reverently smear on their forehead, face, and other parts of the body.

Shaivism itself is subdivided into many different schools, exhibiting a wide range of tenets and practices, often specific to particular regions or countries. Though its origins are lost in history, the worship of *Shiva* is present in the *Shvetāshvatara Upanishad*, while the *Mahābhārata* contains indications of the emerging significance of *Shiva* as a rival to the Vedic deity, *Vishṇu*.

Shaivism is prevalent throughout India, Nepal and Sri Lanka, and also in Southeast Asia, particularly Singapore, Malaysia, and Indonesia. Only a relatively small part of the once extensive Shaivite literature is extant. Shaivism covers a variety of philosophical perspectives, including non-dualism (*abheda*), dualism (*bheda*), and a combination of both (*bhedābheda*) known as qualified monism. *Shiva* is regarded as the first yogi, and Shaivism includes various tantric and yogic schools, with a great many associated texts.

See also: **Shākta**, **Vaiṣṇava**.

**Shākta** (S/H) *Lit.* relating to *shakti* (power); Shaktism; one of the principal divisions of Hinduism, which focuses upon the worship of *Shakti* or *Devī*, the divine Mother, as the supreme, absolute Divinity; also, a follower of Shaktism.<sup>1</sup>

*Shakti*, *Devī*, or *Kālī* (the Goddess) is regarded as *Brahman*, the absolute, divine Reality, and all other deities, indeed all forms in creation, are understood as manifestations of that primal Reality. *Shāktas* therefore focus their worship on the divine *Shakti* or *Devī* as the divine Mother who is manifested in all created forms. She is the divine consciousness and energy infusing life into everything in creation. *Shiva*, the creator deity, is understood as the masculine aspect of the Divine, but is regarded as the entirely aloof and transcendental ground of all being. He is only able to perform his function of creation if united with *Shakti*, who brings the created forms into manifested existence. The belief is represented in iconic representations of *Kālī* standing upon the apparently lifeless body of *Shiva*.

*Shāktas* relate to the Goddess through a variety of names and forms, *Devī*, *Kālī*, *Chandīkā* and *Ambikā* being but a few. For their own personal worship, they choose from many thousands of *ishṭa-devatās* (cherished, favourite, or chosen deities), the choice being influenced by factors such as family and regional tradition, personal preference, their *guru*'s lineage, and so on. Many of these goddesses are associated with particular temples, local geographical features, or individual communities. Some are better known and more popular than others, but practically every goddess in Hinduism is regarded as a manifestation of a more primary goddess.

Like its two counterparts, Shaivism and Vaishnavism, Shaktism has innumerable variations as regards both doctrine and practice, ranging from primitive animism to metaphysical and mystical doctrine and practices of a high order. Some branches advocate yogic and tantric practices that seek to raise the life force, the *kuṇḍalinī*, which is understood to be a manifestation of and ultimately one with the divine *Shakti*. Through merging the consciousness into the *kuṇḍalinī*, the life force rises up through the six bodily *chakras*, and with its help the soul leaves the body through the *brahmarandhra*, a subtle passage, door or gateway in the crown of the head, which leads to the *saḥasrāra* ('thousand-rayed', the thousand-petalled lotus). Although not all forms of *yoga* and *tantra* can be regarded as aspects of Shaktism, both agree on the necessity of receiving initiation (*dīkshā*) and guidance from a suitably qualified *guru*.

Like the two other great branches of Hinduism, Shaivism and Vaishnavism, the origins of Shaktism are lost in the mists of time. It may be linked to the pre-historic fertility cults found in many early cultures. Perhaps it is an antecedent of the Goddess who makes her first appearance in female figurines from the Indus Valley civilization belonging to the Upper Palaeolithic, dating from around 20,000 years ago. And it may be an evolution of this same tradition that is glimpsed once again in the many thousands of female statuettes unearthed at the Neolithic site of Mehrgarh, and dated to as early as c.5500 BCE. Partially eclipsed during the Vedic period (c.1500–600 BCE), it is possibly the same goddess who re-emerges in more recognizable form in classical Sanskrit literature and the Hindu epics. In fully recognizable form, she reaches her most abundant flowering during the Gupta age (300–700 CE), when Shaktism flourished, producing a wealth of literature. Since then it has been a pervasive influence in all aspects of Indian religion. Shaktism, Shaivism and Vaishnavism are not separable from each other; nor do they possess definitive creeds. Hinduism cannot be fitted into neat conceptual compartments; its aspects overflow, merge with and influence each other. Hence the Hindu adage, "When in public, be a *Vaiṣṇava*; in private, a *Shaiva*; in your heart, a *Shākta*."

See also: **Shaiva**, **Vaiṣṇava**.

1. For the source of much of this entry, see "Shaktism," *Wikipedia*, ret. February 2012.

**shālagrām(a)** (S/H), **shāligrām** (H/Pu), **sāl garām** (Pu) A form of black quartz, found chiefly as pebbles (*shīlas*) in the river Gaṇḍakī in Nepal, containing one or more fossil ammonites (a long extinct order of molluscs); named after a village on the banks of the Gaṇḍakī, also called Muktināth (place of

salvation), regarded as sacred by Vaishṇavas, so-called from the plentiful *shāl* trees (*Vatica robusta*) growing there; a name of *Vishṇu* as worshipped at Shāligrām or identified with the *shāligrām shīlas*; a spherical stone idol traditionally worshipped by *brāhmaṇs*.

According to legend, the Gaṇḍakī river is the resting place of *Vishṇu*, and it is believed that the *shāligrām* pebbles found in the river are pervaded by *Vishṇu*'s presence. They are therefore regarded as sacred, and venerated or even worshipped by some Hindus as symbols of *Vishṇu*. It is believed that the sins of those who drink water in which the pebbles have been washed will be erased, and that they will be assured of a place in heaven.

*Shāligrāms* are found in various sizes and colours, nine of which are held to represent the nine *avatars* (incarnations) of *Vishṇu*. It is also believed that black stones confer fame, white ones destroy sin, blue ones give peace, yellow ones grant sons, and violet-coloured *shāligrām shīlas* are a symbol of God's anger – never to be kept in the house.

Mystics do not advocate the worship of inanimate objects, whatever they may represent. According to tradition, a leading pundit in the days of Guru Nānak asked the *guru*: "What faith do you profess? You neither wear a necklace of *tulsī* beads, nor do you carry any *shāligrām*. You have no rosary to count the beads, nor a mark of white clay on your forehead." The *guru* replied:

You worship and believe in your *sāl garām*,  
and wear your ceremonial rosary beads.  
Chant the Name of the Lord (*Rām Nām*).  
Build your boat, and pray,  
"O merciful Lord, please be merciful to me."  
Why do you irrigate barren, alkaline soil?  
You are wasting your life away!  
This wall of mud (the body) is crumbling.  
Why bother to patch it with plaster?

*Guru Nānak, Ādi Granth 1170–71, AGK*

**shāoxiāng** (C) *Lit.* to burn (*shāo*) incense (*xiāng*) as a part of Daoist ritual.

According to the *Tàiqīng wǔshíbā yuànwén* ('Fifty-eight Prayer Texts of the Greatest Purity'):

Daoists who observe the purgations, burn incense (*shāoxiāng*), practise purity and recite the scriptures create prosperity for the world. They do not want to be obvious about it, so even if one sees them, it is as if they were not being seen.

*Tàiqīng wǔshíbā yuànwén, DZ187 5b, CCED p.200*

**shaqq al-qamar** (A/P) *Lit.* splitting (*shaqq*) of the moon (*qamar*). According to a number of *ḥadīth* (traditional sayings and stories concerning the Prophet), as well as popular belief, when asked to perform a miracle as proof of his prophethood, Muḥammad pointed with his finger at the moon, which promptly split into two pieces. As it is related in the *ḥadīth*, the miracle is understood literally. Although most of the relevant *ḥadīth* simply say that the moon was split into two, a few make the miracle unequivocally physical by mentioning the fate of the two pieces. None mention the restoration of the moon that presumably must have subsequently taken place:

During the lifetime of *Allāh*'s Apostle, the moon was split into two parts. One part remained over the mountain, and the other part went beyond the mountain. On that, *Allāh*'s Apostle said, "Witness this miracle."

*Ḥadīth Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* 6:60.387, HSB

The foundation of the belief is presumed to be a verse from the *Qur'ān*. The title of one of the early Meccan *sūrahs* (chapters) is *al-Qamar* (The Moon), which begins with the verse, "The Hour (of Judgment) is nigh, and the moon is cleft asunder (*shaqq al-qamar*)."<sup>1</sup>

Likening God to the sun, Rūmī suggests a mystical meaning to the verse. Some things, he says, like the sun, are such that their existence is proved by direct experience of them. So the sun is its own proof, while shadow is an indirect indication of the sun's existence. To mystics, their inner light is its own evidence. The shadow, *i.e.* the intellect and the phenomenal world, has, like the telling of bedtime stories, put most people to sleep. But when God reveals Himself and illumines the spirit, then the intellect (which derives a shadowy light from God, like the moon from the sun) is shattered, and phenomenal existence disappears in this transcendental experience:

The proof of the Sun is the sun:  
 if you require proof, turn not your face away from Him!  
 If the shadow gives an indication of Him,  
     the Sun Himself gives spiritual light every moment.  
 The shadow, like bedtime stories, lulls you to sleep:  
     but when the sun rises,  
     "the moon is cloven asunder (*shaqq al-qamar*)."  
 There is nothing in the world so wondrous strange as the sun,  
     but the Sun of the spirit is everlasting: it has no yesterday.  
 Although the external sun is unique,  
     yet it is possible to imagine one resembling it;  
 The spiritual Sun, which is beyond the aether,  
     has no peer in the mind or externally.

*Rūmī, Maṣnavī I: 116–21; cf. MJR2 p.10*

In another place, Rūmī observes that the power of the soul in the body is such that when a loaf of inanimate bread is eaten, it is transformed into a living body. Alluding to the story of the legendary lovers, Farhād and Shīrīn, he goes on to say that if the soul in the body has such power that it can induce Farhād to cut through a mountain in order to reach his beloved, how much more power must the “Soul of soul (*Jān-i jān*)” possess? The “Soul of soul” has been differently interpreted as the perfect man or the human soul. Either way, the “soul of soul” – the divine essence of the soul – has the power to split the moon asunder, implying the spiritual ascent beyond the phenomenal world:

If such is the power of the soul (*jān*);  
 what, then, must be the power of that soul of soul (*jān-i jān*)?  
 The piece of flesh which is man,  
 endowed with intelligence and soul (*jān*),  
 cleaves mountain and sea and mine.  
 The strength of the mountain-cleaving soul (*jān-i kōhkan*)  
 is shown in the splitting of rocks –  
 The strength of the soul of soul in  
 “the moon was split asunder (*shaqq al-qamar*).”  
 If the heart should open the flap of the wallet of this mystery,  
 the soul would rush towards the highest heaven.

*Rūmī, Maṣnavī I: 1476–79; cf. MJR2 p.81*

Mystically, “the moon was split asunder” is perhaps an attempt to describe the ascent of the soul as it leaves the body, an experience common not only to mystics but also to many who have had near-death experiences. The inner light is seen as a steadily glowing orb, into which the soul passes, emerging, so to speak, in the astral realms.

See also: **Isrāʾ**, **miʾrāj**.

1. *Qurʾān* 54:1, *AYA*.

**shaqq al-ṣadr, sharḥ al-ṣadr (A), shaqq-i ṣadr, sharḥ-i ṣadr (P)** *Lit.* opening (*shaqq, sharḥ*) of the breast (*ṣadr*); opening of the heart; an incident related variously in Muslim tradition, said to have occurred four times in the life of Muḥammad: once in his infancy, again when he was aged four, then when he was in his fortieth year, and lastly on the night of his *miʾrāj* (ascent to heaven). On each occasion, angels (or, in some versions, just the angel Gabriel) descended to earth and removed the *suqwaydāʾ* – a little black clot of blood present in the core of every human heart, which arises from man’s original

sin and cannot be erased. Gabriel removed Muḥammad's heart and washed it clean (or inserted light into it) before taking him on his ascent (*mī'rāj*) into the presence of God.

In a passage headed "*Shaqq-i ṣadr* – the opening of the breast of the Prophet", Ināyat Khān explains that the meaning of the legend is symbolic:

There exists a legend in the world of Islam, and some believe that it really did occur – some say once, and some say it happened more than once – that the angels from heaven descended on earth, and cut open the breast of the Prophet; they took away something that was to be removed from there, and then the breast was made as before.

According to the Sufi point of view, this is a symbolic legend. It explains what is necessary in the life of man to allow the plant of divine love to grow in his heart. It is to remove that element which gives the bitter feeling. Just as there is a poison in the sting of the scorpion, and as there is a poison in the teeth of the snake, so there is poison in the heart of man, which is made to be the shrine of God. But God cannot arise in the shrine which is as if dead by its own poison; it must be purified first and made real for God to arise. The soul who had to sympathize with the whole world was thus prepared, that the drop of that poison which always produces contempt, resentment and ill-feeling against another, was destroyed first. . . .

In this legend, cutting open of the breast is the cutting open of the ego, which is as a shell over the heart. And taking away that element is that every kind of thought or feeling against anyone in the world was taken away, and the breast, which means the heart, was filled with love alone, which is the real life of God.

*Ināyat Khān, Sufi Message, SMIK13 pp.120–21*

Explaining the same legend at another place, he adds:

It is a symbolic expression, which gives to a Sufi a key to the secret of human life. What closes the doors of the heart is fear, confusion, depression, spite, discouragement, disappointment, and a troubled conscience. When that is cleared away, the doors of the heart open. The opening of the breast is in reality the opening of the heart. The sensation of joy is felt in the centre of the breast, as is the heaviness caused by depression.

Therefore, as long as the breast remains choked with anything, the heart remains closed. When the breast is cleared of it, the heart is open. It is the open heart which receives the reflection of all impressions coming from outside. It is the open heart which can receive reflections

from the divine Spirit within. Also, it is the openness of the heart, which gives power and beauty to express oneself. If it is closed, a man, however learned, cannot express his learning to others.

*‘Ināyat Khān, Sufi Message, SMIK9 p.229*

He also explains that the “heart” or “breast” do not refer to the physical body:

A misconception exists among those who believe that the heart feels. The heart, being the centre of the body, partakes of the effect of the feeling from within, which is the real heart, not the piece of flesh, and it feels suffocated and oppressed. Depression is felt as a heavy load upon the breast. And when the heavy vibrations are cleared, then, especially, a person has a feeling of joy and his heart is lighter than usual. This explains the *shaqq-i ṣadr*, the opening of Muḥammad’s breast by the angels, when fear, gloom, bitterness, and conceit were all cleared away before the manifestation of divine revelation. It is as the darkness clearing away at the rising of the sun.

*‘Ināyat Khān, Sufi Message, SMIK5 p.230*

The expression *sharḥ al-ṣadr*, from which the legend has been elaborated, appears in the *Qur’ān*. It refers to the purification, expansion and elevation of the Prophet’s human nature (“the burden that was breaking your back”), so that he could engage in his ministry and become “a mercy to all believers”:<sup>1</sup>

Have We not expanded your breast (*sharḥ ṣadr*) and relieved you of the burden that was breaking your back? Have We not exalted your status? So, truly, after hardship follows ease.

*Qur’ān 94:1–6; cf. AYA, KPA, MGK*

In a similar use of the expression, the meaning is more general and applies to all believers:

He whose heart God has opened to surrender (*afaman sharḥ Allāhu ṣadrahu lil Islām*), shall follow a light from his Lord. Woe to those whose hearts are hardened against the remembrance of God! They are in manifest error.

*Qur’ān 39:22; cf. AYA, KPA, MGK*

*Sharḥ* means ‘opening’ or ‘splitting open’, and hence also ‘commentary’ or ‘explanation’ – the splitting open of something in order to reveal its meaning. Rūmī plays on this double meaning in a number of places. In the opening verses of his *Maśnavī*, he writes of the soul’s longing for its spiritual origin:



I want a breast (*sīnah*) torn by severance (*sharḥah-sharḥah*),  
 so that I may provide an explanation (*sharḥ*)  
 of the pain of yearning.

*Rūmī, Maṣnavī I:3; cf. MJR2 p.5, in SOU p.118 (n.145)*

In one of his discourses, he explains how a single word on a subject can convey a world of meaning to someone who has read a detailed explanation or commentary (*sharḥ*) about it. But to someone who has not read that explanation, one word will convey no more than its own limited meaning. Likewise, when someone's heart is spiritually open, his wisdom is infinite, and he understands many things:

The opening of the heart (*sharḥ-i dil*) is infinite. When one has read that commentary (*sharḥ*), one understands many symbols. One who is still a neophyte will understand of a given word only the meaning of that one word. What can he know?

*Rūmī, Fīhi mā Fīhi 26, KFF p.112, SOU p.118; cf. DRA p.123*

Again in the *Maṣnavī*, interpreting the *Qur'ān*, Rūmī says that those who desire to become beggars through annihilation of the self (spiritual “poverty”) are in need of an “expansion of the heart (*sharḥ-i dil*)”. This they can receive from “companionship” with the *shaykh*, as a gift from soul to soul:

If you desire poverty,  
 that depends upon companionship (with the *shaykh*):  
 Neither tongue nor hand will help you there.  
 Soul receives from soul the knowledge thereof,  
 not through a book or by the tongue.  
 Although those mysteries are in the traveller's heart (*dil-i sālik*),  
 yet knowledge of the mystery is not possessed by the traveller  
 until the expansion of his heart (*sharḥ-i dil*) shall make it light.  
 As God said, “Did We not expand . . . ?”<sup>2</sup>  
 “For We have given you the expansion  
 within your breast (*sharḥ*);  
 We have put the expansion into your breast (*sharḥ-i sīnah*).”

Yet still you seek it outside.  
 You yourself are a source of milk,  
 why then seek milk from others?  
 There is an inexhaustible fountain of milk within you,  
 why are you seeking milk from the pail?  
 O lake, you have a channel to the Sea:  
 be ashamed to seek water from the pool!

For “Did We not expand ...?”

Again, do you not have the expansion (*sharḥ*)?

How have you become a seeker of the expansion (*sharḥ*), and a beggar?

Contemplate the expansion of the heart (*sharḥ-i dil*) within,

lest there come the reproach, “Do you not see?”<sup>3</sup>

*Rūmī, Maṣnavī V:1063–72; cf. MJR6 pp.65–66*

Rūmī implies that it is God’s assurance that He has already expanded the human heart, where His light can be discovered. Look within your inner heart, he urges, for all Reality is illuminated and revealed in it. Only if you do so can you attain the vision of Reality and avoid the reproach, “Do you not see?” Only when the inner light of God enters the heart can it be said to have opened up or to have enlarged from – as he describes it elsewhere – a “narrow and dark (*tang-u tārīk*)” place where “the radiance of the divine Sun has not shone”.<sup>4</sup> The “sign” of this opening, he says, is that a person turns away from this world, and seeks God:

The Prophet said that the sign of the light

in a man’s breast (*ṣadr*)

is that he withdraws from this abode of delusion

and returns to the abode of joy.<sup>5</sup>

*Rūmī, Maṣnavī IV:3082–83; cf. MJR4 p.442*

See also: **mi‘rāj**, **nuqṭat al-suwaydā’** (8.2), **shaqq al-qamar**.

1. *Qur’ān* 7:52, 9:61, 12:111, *passim*.

2. *Qur’ān* 94:1ff.

3. *Qur’ān* 51:21.

4. Rūmī, *Maṣnavī* II:3130–31; cf. *MJR2* p.384.

5. *Ḥadīth*, *AMBF* 412.

**sharī‘ah** (A), **sharī‘at** (P) *Lit.* law; from *shara‘a* (to introduce, to enact, to prescribe); the beliefs, laws of conduct, way of life, and religious observances of any religion; in Islam, the canonical religious law, including its external rites and rituals, the keeping of religious fasts, undertaking of pilgrimages, formal prayers, the recitation of sacred books, almsgiving, moral and ethical attitudes and behaviour, and so on. The Muslim *sharī‘ah* includes everything from the particulars of performing the five pillars (the profession of faith, ritual prayer, fasting, almsgiving, and pilgrimage), through details of Islamic belief, to mundane matters such as marriage, charity, and the conduct of business.

Theoretically, there is no differentiation in Islam between religion and secular life, and Islamic law covers religious ritual and every other aspect of

life. In practice, however, both now and in the past, there has always been a distinction between family and religious law on the one hand, and civil law on the other.

*Sharī'ah*, which in archaic Arabic means 'path to be followed', refers to the whole of Islamic law. It is regarded as the law of God, immutable and all encompassing. It is based upon precepts laid down in the *Qur'ān* and Islamic tradition (the *Sunnah* and the *ḥadīth*), together with the analogical deduction (*qiyās*), interpretation, elaboration and consensus of opinion of the four main schools of *Sunnī* orthodoxy: the *Shāfi'ī*, *Ḥanblī*, *Ḥanafī*, and *Mālikī*. Other schools of Islamic law, being variations upon the common theme, have also been developed by the Shi'ites, the *Zaydī* Shi'ites, the *Ja'farī*, the *'Ibādīyah*, and the *Khārijīyah*.

The *ḥadīth* (tradition) is the body of sayings and stories associated with the Prophet. They are found either in the various collections made by early scholars such as Mālik ibn Anas (711–795), al-Bukhārī (d.870), Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj (c.817–874), and others; or they are a part of a more loose-knit body of material that has circulated independently of any particular collection. Among the latter are a number of *ḥadīth* quoted by the Sufis.

Material in the *Qur'ān* of a specifically legal nature is relatively scarce, and over time an academic discipline known as *fiqh* (understanding, comprehension, knowledge, insight) has been formulated by jurists, whereby the *sharī'ah* contained in God's revelation (the *Qur'ān* and the *ḥadīth*) is explained, interpreted and elaborated into concrete rules. Since, in practice, *fiqh* is the main method by which many details of the law have been established, the two terms – *sharī'ah* and *fiqh* – are used synonymously. *Sharī'ah*, however, retains the connotation of divine inspiration and *fiqh* that of human interpretation and elaboration. *Fiqh* thus represents Muslim jurisprudence and depends for its sources not only on the *Qur'ān* and the *ḥadīth*, but also on *ijmā'* (consensus) and analogical deduction (*qiyās*).

Since early Islam made no distinction between law and religion, *fiqh* was used equally, along with *sharī'ah* to denote the study of Islamic law and theology. In later times, *fiqh* evolved, taking on an almost exclusively legal connotation.

The nineteenth- and twentieth-century Indian Sufi, 'Ināyat Khān, describes the purpose of the *sharī'at*:

*Sharī'at* means the law which is necessary for the majority to observe, in order to harmonize with one's surroundings and one's self within. Although the religious authorities of Islam have limited this law to restriction, yet in a thousand places in the *Qur'ān* and *ḥadīth* one can trace how the law of *sharī'at* is meant to be subject to change, in order to fit time and place. The law of *sharī'at*, unlike any other religious law, deals with all aspects of life, and that is why the Prophet of Islam

had personally to experience all aspects of life. The Prophet as an orphan, as a warrior, as a politician, as a merchant, as a shepherd, as a king, as a husband, as a father, as a brother, as a son and a grandson, had to play different parts in various aspects of life in the world before he was ready to give this divine law.

*‘Ināyat Khān, Sufi Message, SMIK9 pp.199–200*

In general, Sufis practise the *sharī‘ah*, but their intention is to move beyond the outer form into deeper spiritual territory. At the outset, this is accomplished by developing an understanding of the deeper spiritual meaning of its various rituals and observances. From the *sharī‘ah*, the seeker then moves to the spiritual path, the *ṭarīqah*, which involves spiritual practice leading to all the spiritual states (*aḥwāl*) and stations (*maqāmāt*) identified in Sufism. The goal is realization of the Reality (*Ḥaqīqah*).

Many Sufis have spoken of the relationship between these three:

The *sharī‘at* is the shell,  
Reality (*Ḥaqīqat*) the kernel;  
Between these two lies the path (*ṭarīqat*).

*Lāhijī, Sharḥ-i Gulshan-i Rāz, SGR p.296, in SSE3 p.28*

The *sharī‘at* is the worshipping of God;  
The path (*ṭarīqat*) is the seeking of God;  
And Reality (*Ḥaqīqat*) is seeing God.

*Shaykh Shiblī, in Tadhkirat al-Awliyā’ 2, TAN2 p.177, in SSE3 p.28*

The knowledge of religion (*‘ilm-i dīn*) falls into three categories: knowledge of the religious law (*sharī‘at*), of the spiritual path (*ṭarīqat*), and of divine Reality (*Ḥaqīqat*). The *sharī‘at* is to be taught, the *ṭarīqat* to be acted upon, and *Ḥaqīqat* to be discovered.

*Maybudī, Kashf al-Asrār, KA5 p.394, in SSE9 p.133*

These (three) terms represent waystations which apply to humanity. The *sharī‘at* is solely concerned with denial and affirmation regarding what is physical and phenomenal; the path (*ṭarīqat*) is concerned with utter obliteration (of the ego); and Reality (*Ḥaqīqat*) concerns your bewilderment (in God).

*Abū Sa‘īd al-Khayr, Asrār al-Tawḥīd, AT51 pp.312–13; cf. in SSE3 p.28*

The *sharī‘at* signifies the religious matters that God has laid down through the tongue of the Prophet in the form of words, actions, and commands. Obedience to these ensures the proper regulation of things in this life and the next, and brings about the attainment of perfection.

It applies to both the common people and the elect within the whole community, for the *sharī'at* is the manifestation of the grace that emanates from the Merciful, and represents the mercy that embraces all.

The path (*ṭarīqat*), in the terminology of *ṣūfīs*, represents the travelling that is exclusive to wayfarers on the path to God. It covers the struggles of the preliminary stages that are distant from God, advancement towards the stages of nearness to God, and passage from the transitory to the eternal, ending in attainment of the station of Reality.

Reality (*Ḥaqīqat*) represents the manifestation of the divine Essence, shorn of the veil of mundane existence, where the illusory phenomena of multiplicity are obliterated in the lights of the Essence of God.

*Lāhijī, Sharḥ-i Gulshan-i Rāz, SGR pp.290–91; cf. in SSE3 p.29*

Sufis have generally supported the *sharī'ah*, explaining that the external practices of Islam are a protective framework for the aspiring seeker:

Keep to the path (*ṭarīqat*) through the *sharī'at*, and to Reality (*Ḥaqīqat*) through the path (*ṭarīqat*); for he whose (spiritual) state is not protected by the *sharī'at*, will find his present and future states developing into passion and temptation. I seek refuge in God from decrease after abundance.

Whoever fails to protect his perception of Reality (*Ḥaqīqat*) by following the path (*ṭarīqat*) finds it corrupted for him, such that he falls into backsliding and heresy:

Without knowledge of the *sharī'at*,  
one will not reach the path (*ṭarīqat*);  
Without knowledge of the path (*ṭarīqat*),  
one will not find Reality (*Ḥaqīqat*).

*Shāh Nīmat Allāh Valī, Rasā'il, RNV4 pp.143–44; cf. in SSE4 p.46*

Junayd also insists on the importance of the *sharī'ah* in Sufism:

Junayd said, "According to those versed in knowledge, the principles of the creed of Sufism are fivefold: fasting, the nightly vigil, sincerity of action, the performance of deeds with continuous observance of the *sharī'ah*, and trust in God in every situation."

*Abū Naṣr al-Sarrāj, Luma' fī al-Taṣawwuf, KLTA p.217, in SSE3 p.47*

In a similar vein, Rūzbihān includes neglect of the *sharī'at* in a long and detailed list of errors committed by seekers on the Sufi path:

Not to study the science of the *sharīʿat*, considering it beneath oneself to learn it: Those who commit this error claim that the *sharīʿat* is a waste of time with respect to the path; in their presumption they are ignorant of their ignorance. . . .

To flout the prohibitions and prescriptions of caution, claiming that observance of the *sharīʿat* is for those who have not arrived, and that if one is in Unity, everything is the same: This claim is founded upon ignorance and a lack of understanding of the relationship between free will and God’s testing to which the servant is subjected; for the servant is held responsible by God for all he does.

*Rūzbihān, Ghalatāt al-Sālikīn, RQR pp.99–100; cf. in SSE6 p.96*

Shabistarī says that the distinctions of the *sharīʿat*, or the differences between religious faiths, are due to the ‘I’. Once the ego is gone, then there is no difference between Muslim, Jew, or Christian. Even so, he advises, follow the *sharīʿat* for as long as the individual “self” is active:

All decrees of the *sharīʿat* are concerned with your ‘I’,  
 since the ‘I’ is tied to your body and soul.  
 Once your ‘I’ disappears there is no difference  
 between *Kaʿbah*, synagogue (*kunisht*), and monastery (*dayr*). . . .  
 Yet so long as you retain your self: beware, beware!  
 Observe the decrees of the *sharīʿat*.

*Shabistarī, Gulshan-i Rāz 303–4, 731, GRS pp.56, 95; cf. GRSS pp.31, 72*

In a similar vein, Ibn al-ʿArabī comments that the *sharīʿah*, by which he means religious teachings in general, provides a means of approach to God that is essential for those seeking the mystical path. Had humanity relied solely on cold reason, he observes, it would have got nowhere:

By God, were it not for the *sharīʿah*, . . . no one would know God! If we had remained with our rational proofs – which, in the opinion of the rational thinkers, establish knowledge of God’s Essence, showing that “He is not like this” and “not like that” – no created thing would ever have loved God. But the tongues of the religions gave a divine report saying that “He is like this” and “He is like that,” mentioning affairs which outwardly contradict rational proofs. He made us love Him through these positive attributes. Then, having set down the relationships and established the cause and the kinship which bring about love, He said, “Nothing is like Him.”<sup>1</sup>

*Ibn al-ʿArabī, Meccan Revelations 2:326.12,  
 FMIA3 (2:178) pp.488–89, SPK p.180*

Ibn al-ʿArabī also points out that some Sufi *shaykhs* become so absorbed in God that they forget about external observances. In which case, he counsels, although they are “freedmen in God”, they should not be followed:

To revere the *shaykh* is to show reverence to none but God,  
 so revere him out of courtesy toward God in God. . . .  
 They are the inheritors of all the messengers,  
 so their words come only from God.  
 You see them like the prophets among their enemies,  
 never asking from God anything but God.  
 But if a state should appear in them which distracts them  
 from the *sharī'ah*, leave them with God –  
 Follow not after them and walk not in their tracks,  
 for they are God's freedmen in God.  
 Be not guided by him from whom the *sharī'ah* has gone,  
 even if he brings news from God!

*Ibn al-ʿArabī, Meccan Revelations 2:364.28, FMIA3 (2:181) p.546, SPK p.271*

Hujwīrī is unequivocal in his opinion that the *sharī'at* is required for as long as the soul is in the body:

These terms (*sharī'at* and *Ḥaqīqat*) are used by the *ṣūfīs* to denote soundness of the outward state and maintenance of the inward state. Two parties err in this matter: firstly, the formal theologians, who assert that there is no distinction between *sharī'at* (law) and *Ḥaqīqat* (Truth). . . . Secondly, some heretics, who hold that it is possible for one of these to subsist without the other, and declare that when the Truth (*Ḥaqīqat*) is revealed, the law (*sharī'at*) is abolished. . . .

*Ḥaqīqat* . . . signifies a reality which does not admit of abrogation, and remains in equal force from the time of Adam to the end of the world, like knowledge of God and like spiritual practice, which is made perfect by sincere intention. *Sharī'at* signifies a reality which admits of abrogation and alteration, like ordinances and commandments. Therefore, *sharī'at* is man's act, while *Ḥaqīqat* is in God's keeping and preservation and protection. Whence it follows that *sharī'at* cannot possibly be maintained without the existence of *Ḥaqīqat*, and *Ḥaqīqat* cannot be maintained without the observance of *sharī'at*.

Their mutual relationship may be compared to that of the body and spirit: when the spirit departs from the body the living body becomes a corpse, and the spirit vanishes like wind, for their value depends on their conjunction with one another. Similarly, the law (*sharī'at*)

without the Truth (*Ḥaqīqat*) is ostentation, and the Truth (*Ḥaqīqat*) without the law (*sharīʿat*) is hypocrisy. . . .

The law (*sharīʿat*) is one of the acts acquired by man, but the Truth (*Ḥaqīqat*) is one of the gifts bestowed by God.

*Hujwīrī, Kashf al-Mahjūb XXIV, KMM pp.498–99; cf. KM pp.383–84*

Moving to another culture where Islam was prevalent, Guru Arjun, a sixteenth-century Indian *sant* of what became the Sikh tradition, addresses his Muslim audience, advising an entirely spiritual approach to all aspects of religion and the spiritual path:

Make the practice of the Name thy *sharīʿat*;  
 Make the search for God and abandonment of the world thy *ṭarīqat*;  
 O holy man, make the silencing of the mind, thy *mārfat* (gnosis);  
 And meeting with God thy *Ḥaqīqat*,  
 by which thou shalt not die again.

*Guru Arjun, Ādi Granth 1083, MMS*

1. *Qurʾān* 42:11.